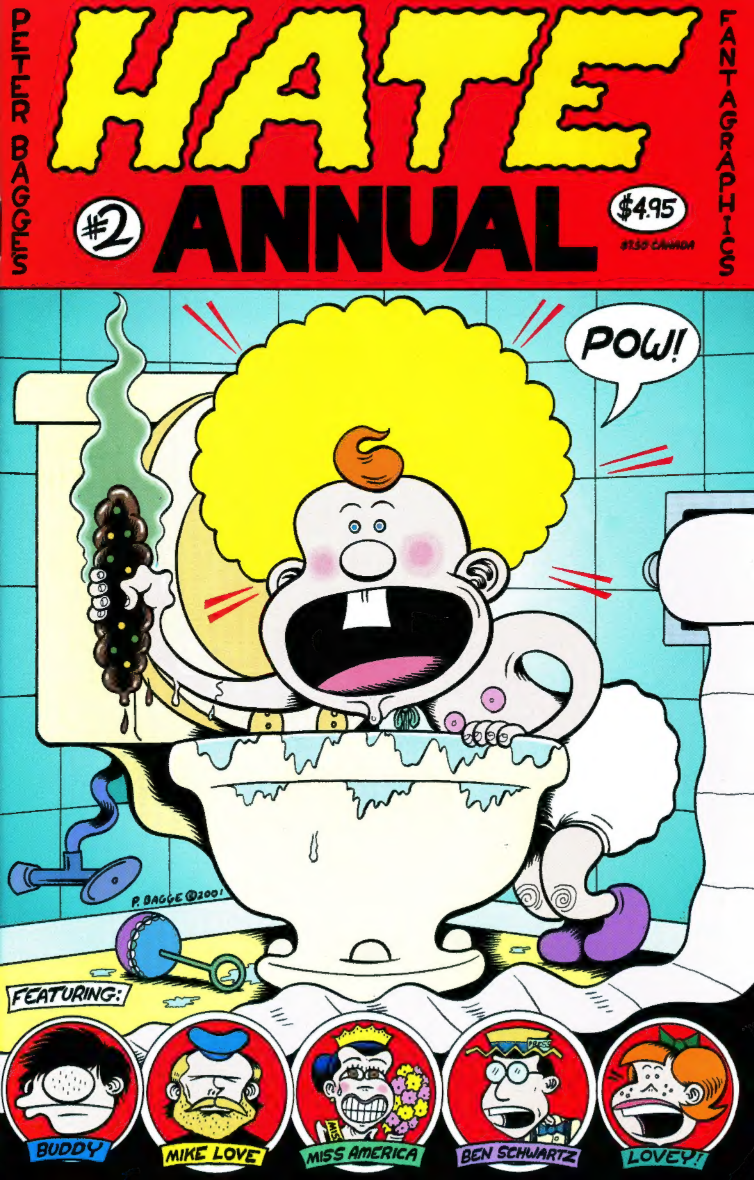
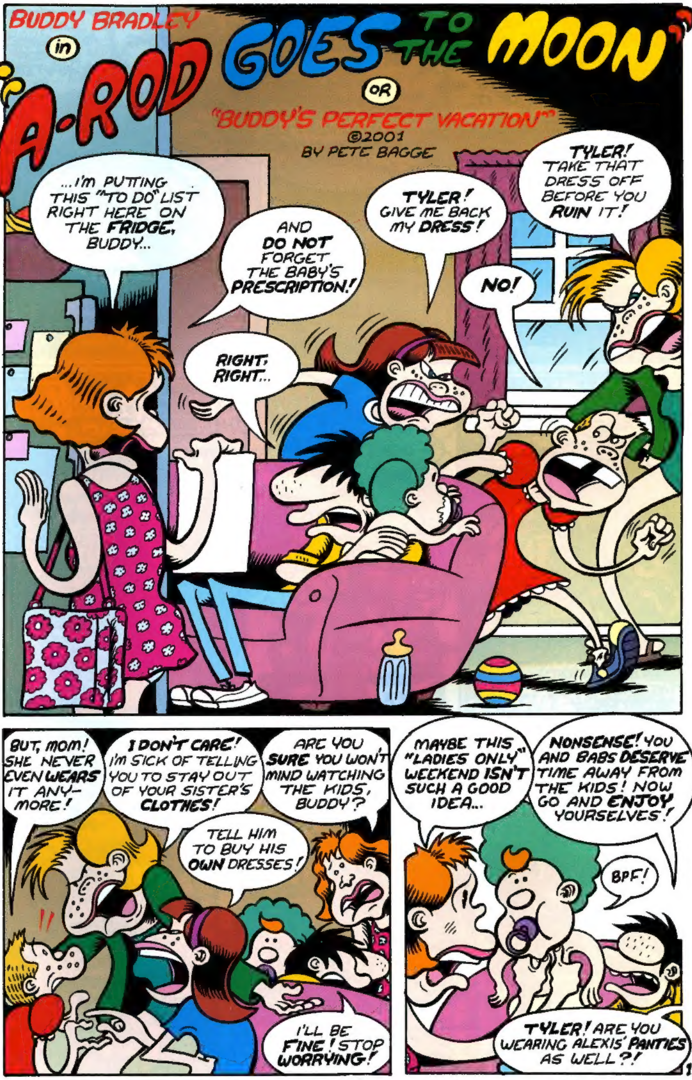

PETER BAGGE'S
HATE
#2
ANNUAL
$4.95
FANTAGRAPHICS
POW!
P. BAGGE ©2001
FEATURING:
BUDDY
MIKE LOVE
MISS AMERICA
BEN SCHWARTZ
LOVEY!



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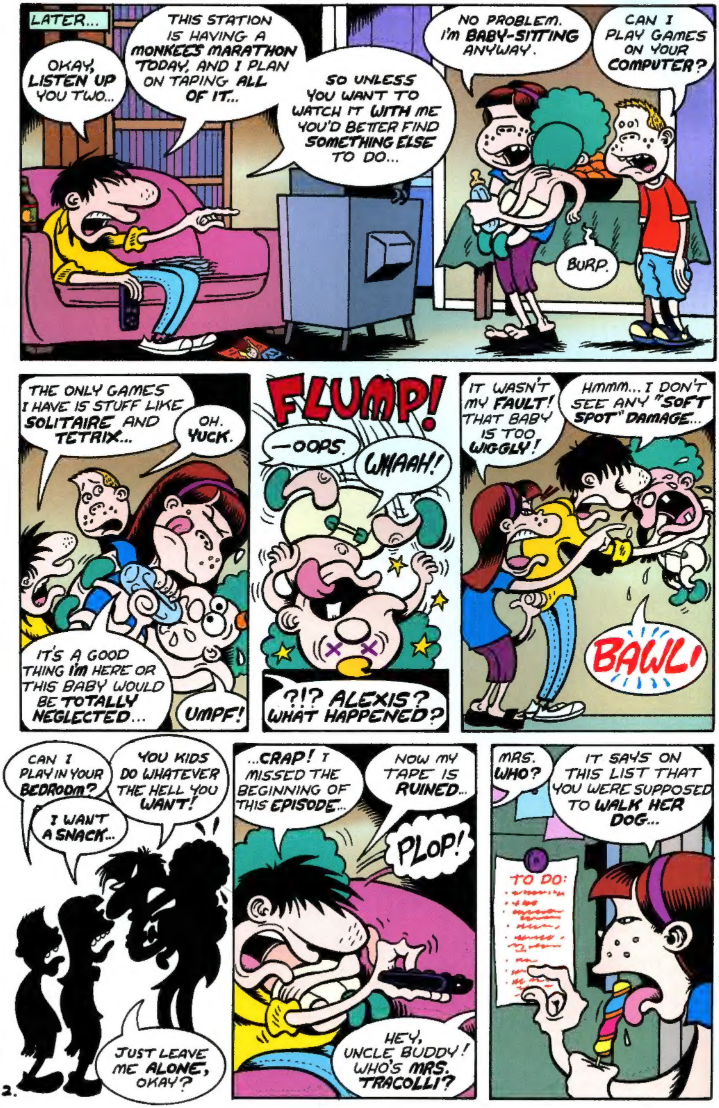
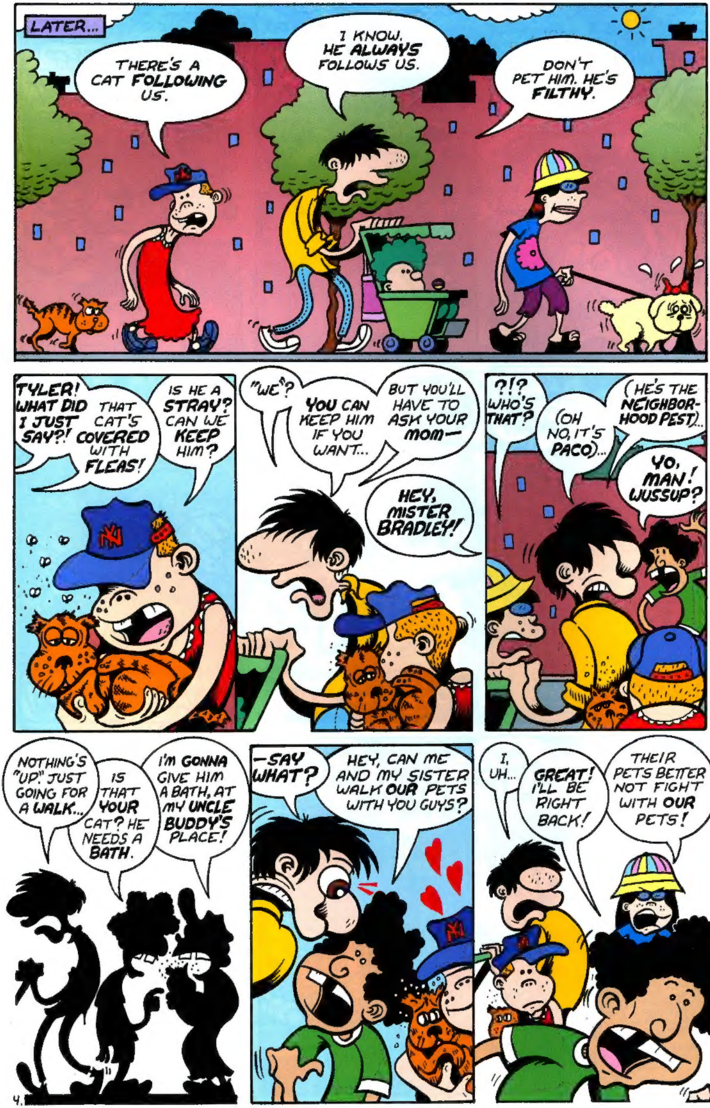
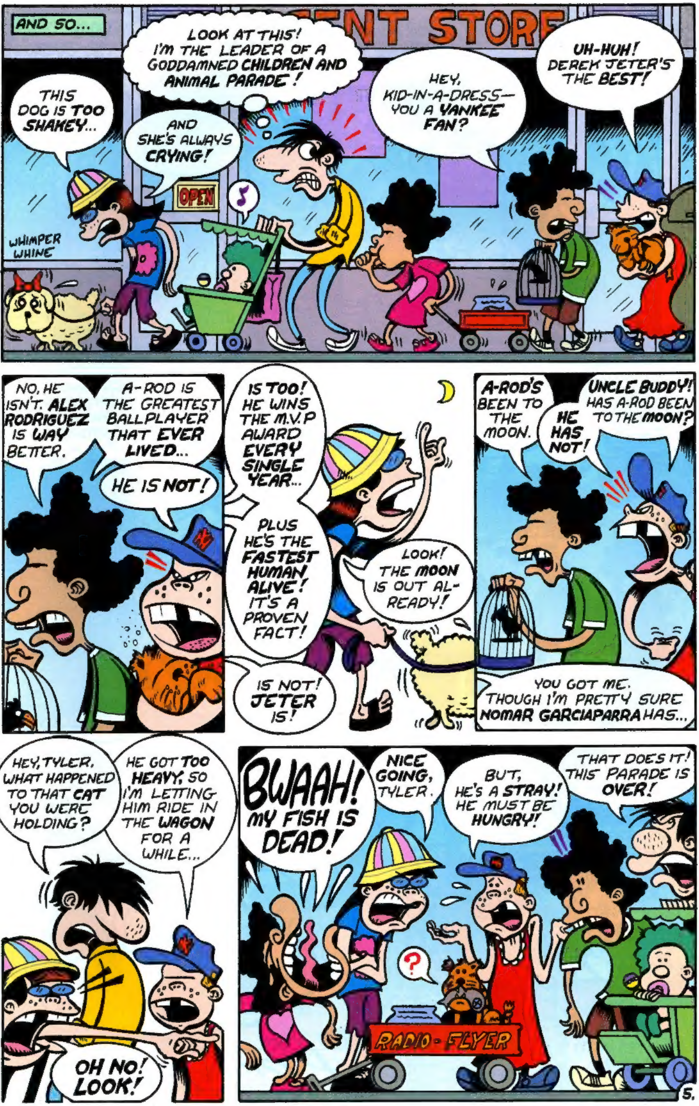
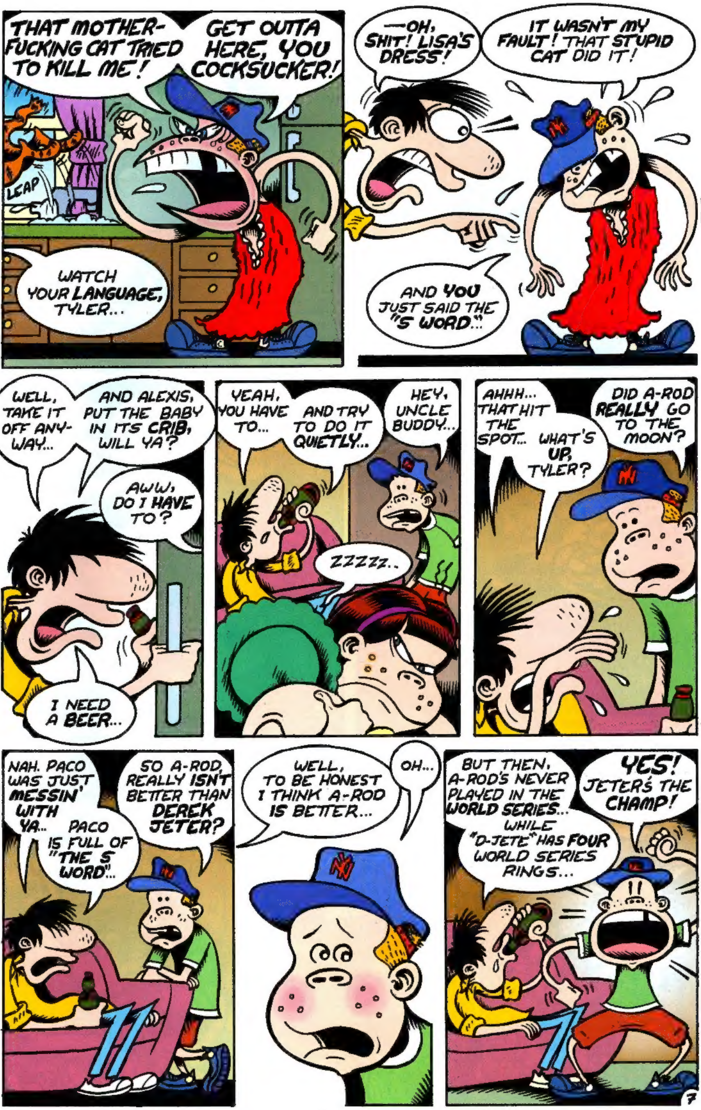

LATER...
OKAY, LISTEN UP YOU TWO...
THIS STATION IS HAVING A MONKEES MARATHON TODAY, AND I PLAN ON TAPING ALL OF IT...
SO UNLESS YOU WANT TO WATCH IT WITH ME YOU'D BETTER FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO DO...
NO PROBLEM. I'M BABY-SITTING ANYWAY.
CAN I PLAY GAMES ON YOUR COMPUTER?
BURP.
THE ONLY GAMES I HAVE IS STUFF LIKE SOLITAIRE AND TETRIX...
OH. YUCK.
IT'S A GOOD THING I'M HERE OR THIS BABY WOULD BE TOTALLY NEGLECTED...
UMPF!
FLUMP!
—OOPS.
WHAAH!
?!? ALEXIS? WHAT HAPPENED?
IT WASN'T MY FAULT! THAT BABY IS TOO WIGGLY!
HMMM... I DON'T SEE ANY "SOFT SPOT" DAMAGE...
BAWL!
CAN I PLAY IN YOUR BEDROOM?
YOU KIDS DO WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANT!
I WANT A SNACK...
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE, OKAY?
...CRAP! I MISSED THE BEGINNING OF THIS EPISODE...
NOW MY TAPE IS RUINED...
PLOP!
HEY, UNCLE BUDDY! WHO'S MRS. TRACOLLI?
MRS. WHO?
IT SAYS ON THIS LIST THAT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO WALK HER DOG...
TO DO:

OH, CRAP! THAT'S RIGHT!
SHE'S THE LITTLE OLD LADY NEXT DOOR...
I FORGOT ALL ABOUT HER AND HER STUPID DOG!
?
ALEXIS, WILL YOU WATCH THE BABY WHILE I—
NO! I'M TOO YOUNG TO BABY-SIT!
I'M ONLY TEN!
SIGH... I GUESS WE'RE ALL GOING FOR A WALK, THEN...
WHERE'S TYLER?
TYLER! WHAT DID MOM SAY ABOUT WEARING MY CLOTHES?
IT'S NOT YOURS, IT'S AUNT LISA'S...
GASP! UNCLE BUDDY!
TYLER'S WEARING AUNT LISA'S DRESS!
HURRY UP AND GET CHANGED, TYLER. WE'RE GOING OUT...
I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE! WHY CAN'T I GO OUT LIKE THIS?
'CUZ THEN EVERYONE WILL KNOW YOU'RE GAY...
GRRRR! DON'T CALL ME THAT WORD!
OWWW! UNCLE BUDDY!
BASH!
COOL IT, YOU TWO!
YOU CAN KEEP THAT DRESS ON IF YOU REALLY WANT TO...
JUST DON'T GET ANY FOOD ON IT...
HA!
OH GHOD, HOW EMBARRASSING!
...NOW WHERE DID THAT BABY CRAWL OFF TO?

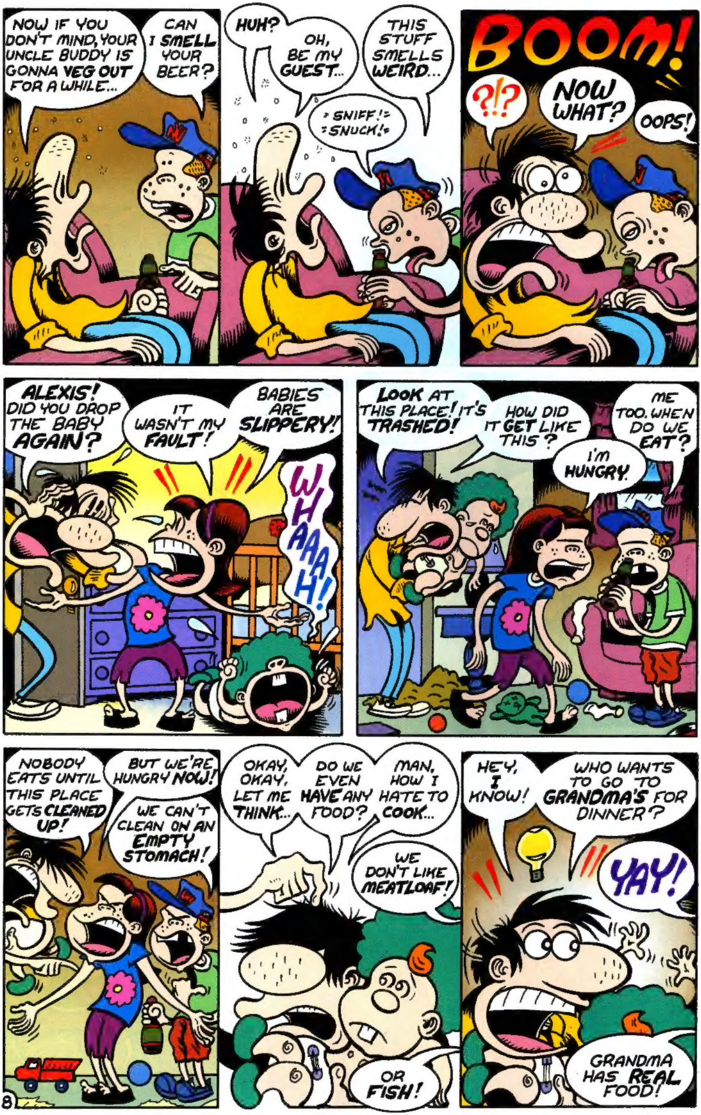

LATER...
THERE'S A CAT FOLLOWING US.
I KNOW. HE ALWAYS FOLLOWS US.
DON'T PET HIM. HE'S FILTHY.
TYLER! WHAT DID I JUST SAY?!
THAT CAT'S COVERED WITH FLEAS!
IS HE A STRAY? CAN WE KEEP HIM?
"WE"?
YOU CAN KEEP HIM IF YOU WANT...
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK YOUR MOM—
HEY, MISTER BRADLEY!
?!? WHO'S THAT?
(OH NO, IT'S PACO)...
(HE'S THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD PEST)...
YO, MAN! WUSSUP?
NOTHING'S "UP." JUST GOING FOR A WALK...
IS THAT YOUR CAT? HE NEEDS A BATH.
I'M GONNA GIVE HIM A BATH, AT MY UNCLE BUDDY'S PLACE!
—SAY WHAT?
HEY, CAN ME AND MY SISTER WALK OUR PETS WITH YOU GUYS?
I, UH...
GREAT! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
THEIR PETS BETTER NOT FIGHT WITH OUR PETS!
4.

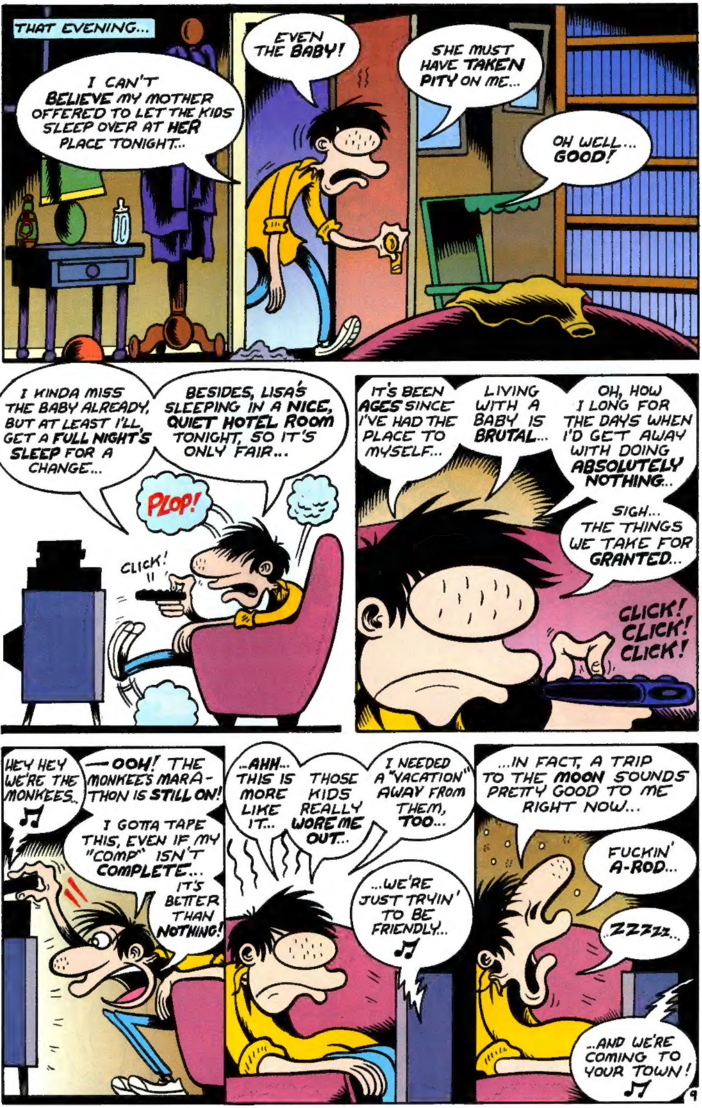

AND SO...
...ENT STORE
THIS DOG IS TOO SHAKEY...
AND SHE'S ALWAYS CRYING!
LOOK AT THIS! I'M THE LEADER OF A GODDAMNED CHILDREN AND ANIMAL PARADE!
OPEN
WHIMPER WHINE
HEY, KID-IN-A-DRESS— YOU A YANKEE FAN?
UH-HUH! DEREK JETER'S THE BEST!
NO, HE ISN'T. ALEX RODRIGUEZ IS WAY BETTER.
A-ROD IS THE GREATEST BALLPLAYER THAT EVER LIVED...
HE IS NOT!
IS TOO! HE WINS THE M.V.P AWARD EVERY SINGLE YEAR...
PLUS HE'S THE FASTEST HUMAN ALIVE! IT'S A PROVEN FACT!
IS NOT! JETER IS!
LOOK! THE MOON IS OUT AL-READY!
A-ROD'S BEEN TO THE MOON.
HE HAS NOT!
UNCLE BUDDY! HAS A-ROD BEEN TO THE MOON?
YOU GOT ME. THOUGH I'M PRETTY SURE NOMAR GARCIAPARRA HAS...
HEY, TYLER, WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT CAT YOU WERE HOLDING?
HE GOT TOO HEAVY, SO I'M LETTING HIM RIDE IN THE WAGON FOR A WHILE...
OH NO! LOOK!
BWAAH! MY FISH IS DEAD!
NICE GOING, TYLER.
BUT, HE'S A STRAY! HE MUST BE HUNGRY!
THAT DOES IT! THIS PARADE IS OVER!
?
RADIO-FLYER
5.

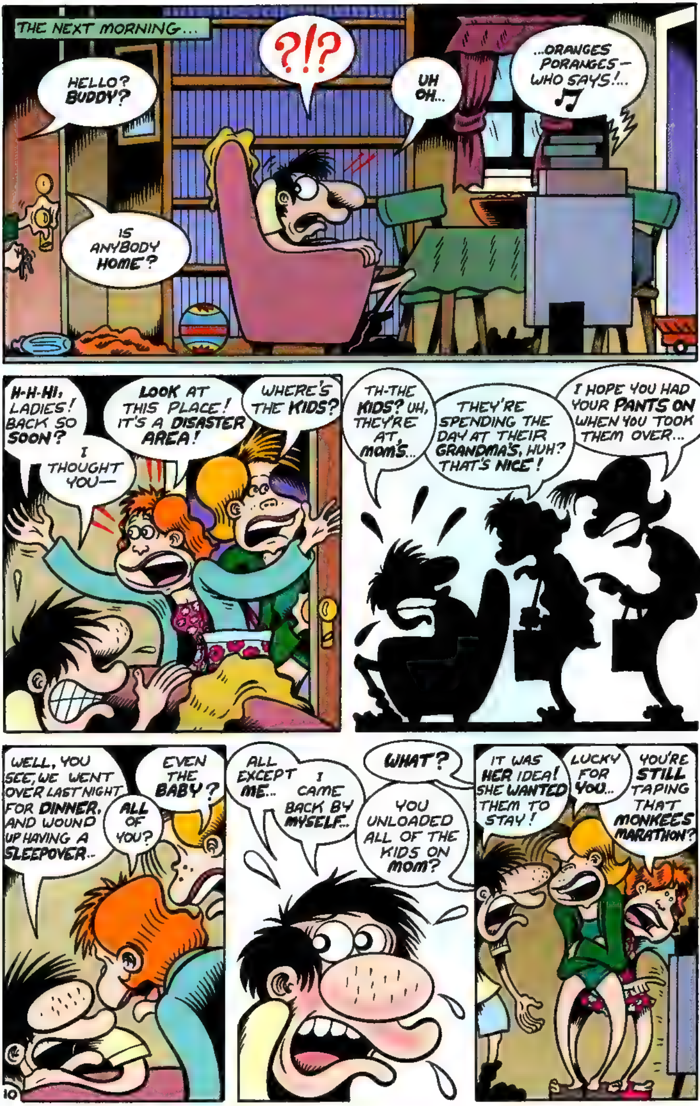
BACK AT BUDDY'S "CRIB"...
=WHEW!= WHAT AN ORDEAL!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU BOUGHT THAT LITTLE CRYBABY A NEW GOLDFISH, UNCLE BUDDY!
CAN I GIVE "D-JETE" HIS BATH NOW?
ZZZZZ...
SURE. BUT USE PLENTY OF FLEA SHAMPOO, TYLER...
AND ALEXIS, IF I DIDN'T BUY HER A NEW FISH HER MOM WOULD HAVE MADE A—
I WILL.
?!?
ZZZZ...
ALEXIS! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
I'M LIGHTING ONE OF THOSE STINK BOMBS WE BOUGHT AT THE 99¢ STORE...
SSSS...
NOT IN THE HOUSE! TAKE THEM OUTSIDE, F'R CHRIS-SAKES!
?!?
MAN, DOES THAT THING SMELL... P-U!
OKAY, D-JETE, INTO THE SINK YOU GO...
MEERRROWWW!
OUCH!
NOW WHAT?

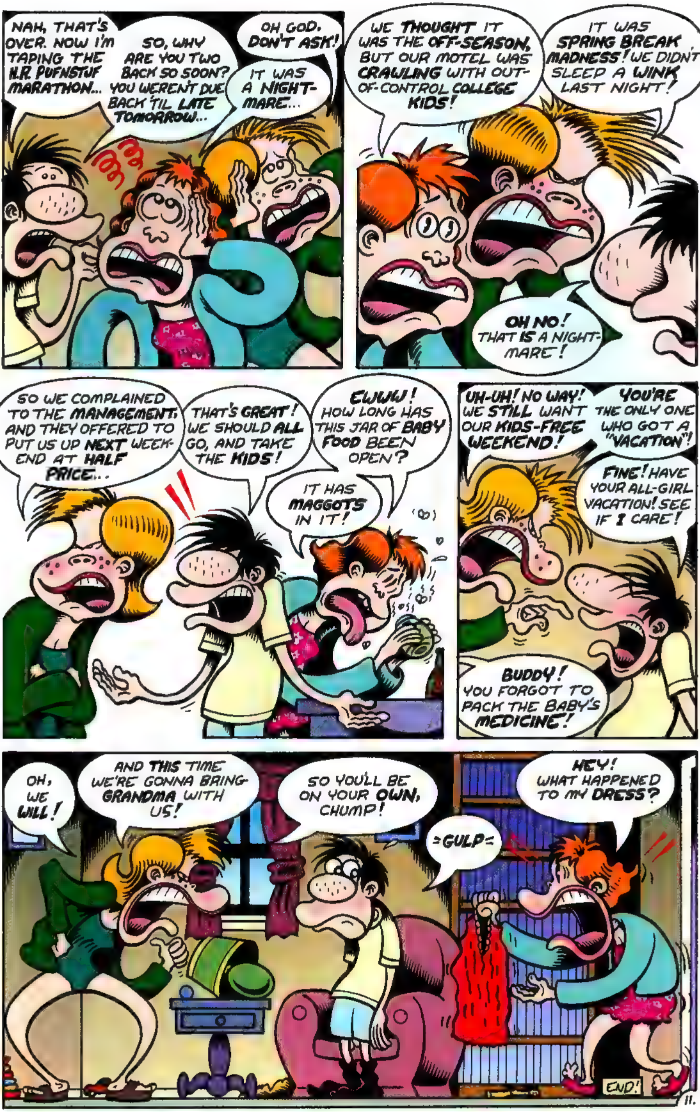


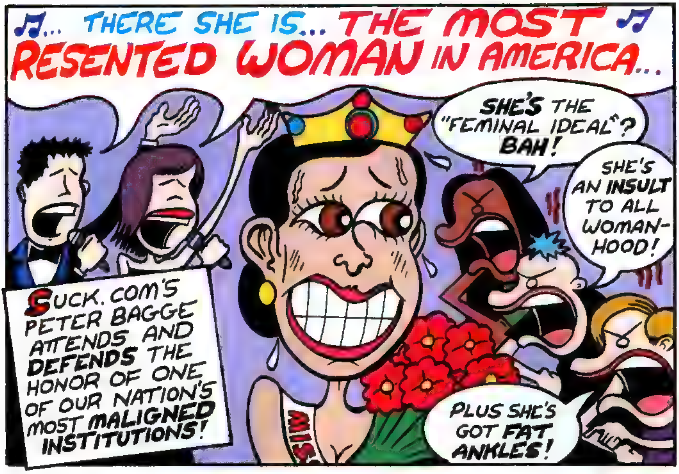
THAT MOTHER-FUCKING CAT TRIED TO KILL ME!
GET OUTTA HERE, YOU COCKSUCKER!
LEAP
WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE, TYLER...
—OH, SHIT! LISA'S DRESS!
IT WASN'T MY FAULT! THAT STUPID CAT DID IT!
AND YOU JUST SAID THE "S WORD".
WELL, TAKE IT OFF ANYWAY...
AND ALEXIS, PUT THE BABY IN ITS CRIB, WILL YA?
AWW, DO I HAVE TO?
I NEED A BEER...
YEAH, YOU HAVE TO...
AND TRY TO DO IT QUIETLY...
HEY, UNCLE BUDDY...
ZZZZZ..
AHHH... THAT HIT THE SPOT... WHAT'S UP, TYLER?
DID A-ROD REALLY GO TO THE MOON?
NAH. PACO WAS JUST MESSIN' WITH YA... PACO IS FULL OF "THE S WORD"...
SO A-ROD REALLY ISN'T BETTER THAN DEREK JETER?
WELL, TO BE HONEST I THINK A-ROD IS BETTER...
OH...
BUT THEN, A-ROD'S NEVER PLAYED IN THE WORLD SERIES... WHILE "D-JETE" HAS FOUR WORLD SERIES RINGS...
YES! JETER'S THE CHAMP!

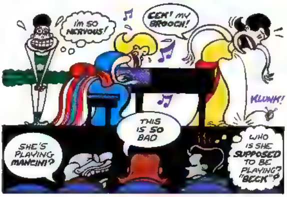

NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, YOUR UNCLE BUDDY IS GONNA VEG OUT FOR A WHILE...
CAN I SMELL YOUR BEER?
HUH?
OH, BE MY GUEST...
THIS STUFF SMELLS WEIRD...
SNIFF! SNUCK!
BOOM!
?!?
NOW WHAT?
OOPS!
ALEXIS! DID YOU DROP THE BABY AGAIN?
IT WASN'T MY FAULT!
BABIES ARE SLIPPERY!
WHAAAAH!
LOOK AT THIS PLACE! IT'S TRASHED!
HOW DID IT GET LIKE THIS?
I'M HUNGRY.
ME TOO. WHEN DO WE EAT?
NOBODY EATS UNTIL THIS PLACE GETS CLEANED UP!
BUT WE'RE HUNGRY NOW!
WE CAN'T CLEAN ON AN EMPTY STOMACH!
OKAY, OKAY, LET ME THINK...
DO WE EVEN HAVE ANY FOOD?
MAN, HOW I HATE TO COOK...
WE DON'T LIKE MEATLOAF!
OR FISH!
HEY, I KNOW!
WHO WANTS TO GO TO GRANDMA'S FOR DINNER?
YAY!
GRANDMA HAS REAL FOOD!


THAT EVENING...
I CAN'T BELIEVE MY MOTHER OFFERED TO LET THE KIDS SLEEP OVER AT HER PLACE TONIGHT...
EVEN THE BABY!
SHE MUST HAVE TAKEN PITY ON ME...
OH WELL... GOOD!
I KINDA MISS THE BABY ALREADY, BUT AT LEAST I'LL GET A FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP FOR A CHANGE...
BESIDES, LISA'S SLEEPING IN A NICE, QUIET HOTEL ROOM TONIGHT, SO IT'S ONLY FAIR...
PLOP!
CLICK!
IT'S BEEN AGES SINCE I'VE HAD THE PLACE TO MYSELF...
LIVING WITH A BABY IS BRUTAL...
OH, HOW I LONG FOR THE DAYS WHEN I'D GET AWAY WITH DOING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING...
SIGH... THE THINGS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED...
CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!
HEY HEY WE'RE THE MONKEES...
—OOH! THE MONKEES MARA-THON IS STILL ON!
I GOTTA TAPE THIS, EVEN IF MY "COMP" ISN'T COMPLETE...
IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING!
...AHH... THIS IS MORE LIKE IT...
THOSE KIDS REALLY WORE ME OUT...
I NEEDED A "VACATION" AWAY FROM THEM, TOO...
...WE'RE JUST TRYIN' TO BE FRIENDLY...
...IN FACT, A TRIP TO THE MOON SOUNDS PRETTY GOOD TO ME RIGHT NOW...
FUCKIN' A-ROD...
ZZZZZ...
...AND WE'RE COMING TO YOUR TOWN!


THE NEXT MORNING...
HELLO? BUDDY?
?!?
UH OH...
...ORANGES PORANGES— WHO SAYS!...
IS ANYBODY HOME?
H-H-HI, LADIES! BACK SO SOON?
I THOUGHT YOU—
LOOK AT THIS PLACE! IT'S A DISASTER AREA!
WHERE'S THE KIDS?
TH-THE KIDS? UH, THEY'RE AT, MOM'S...
THEY'RE SPENDING THE DAY AT THEIR GRANDMA'S, HUH? THAT'S NICE!
I HOPE YOU HAD YOUR PANTS ON WHEN YOU TOOK THEM OVER...
WELL, YOU SEE, WE WENT OVER LAST NIGHT FOR DINNER, AND WOUND UP HAVING A SLEEPOVER...
EVEN THE BABY?
ALL OF YOU?
ALL EXCEPT ME...
I CAME BACK BY MYSELF...
WHAT?
YOU UNLOADED ALL OF THE KIDS ON MOM?
IT WAS HER IDEA! SHE WANTED THEM TO STAY!
LUCKY FOR YOU...
YOU'RE STILL TAPING THAT MONKEES MARATHON?


NAH, THAT'S OVER. NOW I'M TAPING THE H.R. PUFNSTUF MARATHON...
SO, WHY ARE YOU TWO BACK SO SOON? YOU WEREN'T DUE BACK 'TIL LATE TOMORROW...
OH GOD. DON'T ASK!
IT WAS A NIGHT-MARE...
WE THOUGHT IT WAS THE OFF-SEASON, BUT OUR MOTEL WAS CRAWLING WITH OUT-OF-CONTROL COLLEGE KIDS!
IT WAS SPRING BREAK MADNESS! WE DIDN'T SLEEP A WINK LAST NIGHT!
OH NO! THAT IS A NIGHT-MARE!
SO WE COMPLAINED TO THE MANAGEMENT, AND THEY OFFERED TO PUT US UP NEXT WEEK-END AT HALF PRICE...
THAT'S GREAT! WE SHOULD ALL GO, AND TAKE THE KIDS!
EWWW! HOW LONG HAS THIS JAR OF BABY FOOD BEEN OPEN?
IT HAS MAGGOTS IN IT!
UH-UH! NO WAY! WE STILL WANT OUR KIDS-FREE WEEKEND!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT A "VACATION"!
FINE! HAVE YOUR ALL-GIRL VACATION! SEE IF I CARE!
BUDDY! YOU FORGOT TO PACK THE BABY'S MEDICINE!
OH, WE WILL!
AND THIS TIME WE'RE GONNA BRING GRANDMA WITH US!
SO YOU'LL BE ON YOUR OWN, CHUMP!
=GULP=
HEY! WHAT HAPPENED TO MY DRESS?
END!





So there I was, sitting in Atlantic City's charming yet crumbling Boardwalk Convention Hall days before the equally charming yet crumbling Miss America Pageant itself was to take place. A handful of contestants were taking turns rehearsing their "talent" segment of the competition, as each girl nervously tried to qualify as a finalist before the cameras rolled, thus assuring herself of at least a few minutes of TV stardom. The pressure was on!

Some of these girls' talents were pretty impressive — such as Miss District of Columbia's "jazz harp" Gershwin medley — but they still all seemed like they were all acting out their childhood fantasies of becoming a diva/ballerina/concert pianist, as I sat through one Rodgers and Hammerstein, Mozart, or Andrew Lloyd Webber tune after another; each one served up with a smile and a wave and a big honkin' BROOCH.

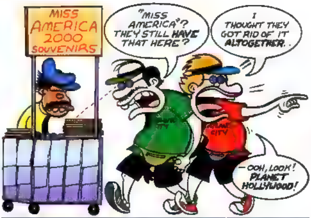
I must confess that at first I was just as cynical as the all the other jaded, Mancini-hating, hipper-than-thou journalists in attendance, giggling cruelly at every flat note or missed cue. I got a big laugh in particular out of Miss Pennsylvania as she waited in the wings for her turn: This tiny lass was wearing the biggest goddamned TUTU I'd ever seen, and from where I was sitting her oversized warm-up sweater and striped leggings made her look like a toy clown. Then during her ultra-girly ballet routine she almost decapitated herself by running headlong into a camera crane. Ha ha!

Once she was done and had changed into her street clothes she sat down right in front of me in the audience, and I was dumbstruck by how beautiful Miss Bozo actually was. She "got even" with me simply by being a knockout. I hadn't felt that cooties-infested since grade school.

The Pageant is run by (and overrun WITH) a bunch of bow-adjusting, under-employed volunteer matronly types, as well as numerous hired gay coaches and advisors (or "mentors," as they prefer to be called). They were all very protective of "The Girls," and would constantly fuss over them — and over everything and everyone else, for that matter. The matrons would even fuss over ME, every time I had a question or got lost on the way to a press conference. Fuss Fuss Fuss!

They were just trying to be helpful and nice, though. In fact, "niceness" abounded at the Miss America Pageant. I was DROWNING in Niceness! NICE NICE NICE!

Even the mothers of the contestants were on their best behavior, in spite of their murderous reputations. They did all seem to be of a type, though, with their loud, Cosby-esque ski sweaters; and they all sported same short, harsh, fresh-for-the-pageant salt and pepper hairdos. These moms are NOT to be messed with, that's for sure.

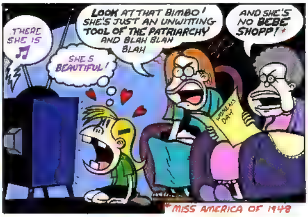


Meanwhile, the poor dads all struck me as benign, "supportive" afterthoughts. In almost every interview I heard or read the contestants would thank and credit their domineering mothers for everything, while rarely even mentioning their doormat dads. Female domination appears to be the rule in your typical beauty pageant household, in spite of the reactionary appearance of the pageants themselves.

The Pageant itself now seems like an afterthought to the booming, gambling-addicted Atlantic City of Today, though it used to be the Biggest Deal In Town not too long ago. In fact, the town fathers first concocted the whole notion of a Miss America Pageant 80 years ago simply as a hook to draw the sweltering Philadelphians back to their resort town for one last summer bash on Labor Day weekend.

Yet while always professing some high ideals in how it made its selection (early judges often included artists such as Norman Rockwell, who was asked to rate the contestants for such attributes as "head construction"), the Pageant still seemed like little more than a jazz-era equivalent of a wet t-shirt contest by many, and was eventually shut down by a kill-joy coalition of feminist and religious groups in 1928 for what everyone at the time assumed was for good.

Ah, but money (or the lack thereof) changes everything, and a cleaned-up version of the Pageant was revived in 1933 to help jump-start AC's floundering, depression-starved economy. Operating by a strict set of rules, Miss America was now much more appealing to the glamour-hungry, royalty-deprived American public than ever before.



* MISS AMERICA OF 1948

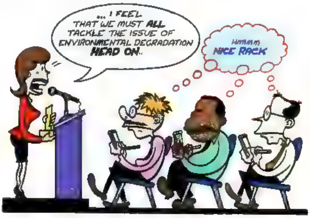
Live radio and (later) television broadcasts also helped convert The Pageant from a local publicity stunt to a National Event, thus changing the concept of The Girl Next Door becoming an Overnight "Star" from fantasy into a reality. Would-be Cinderellas (and Cinder-fellahs) everywhere were now hopelessly fascinated by The Miss America Pageant.

What exactly qualifies someone to BECOME "Miss America" has always been a cause for endless debate, however. Since the audience for the pageant is almost entirely female, the organizers are constantly guessing at — as well as pandering to — what the Average American Woman thinks are the most important attributes a young woman ought to exhibit. Beauty AND brains have always been prerequisites, but how one WEIGHS the two is what gets everyone all in a tizzy. As a result, publicizing the contestants' measurements is now OUT, while publicizing her grade point average is IN (while the TV ratings continue to go DOWN... Zzzzzzz...).

Press Conference Time! This one's for the "Quality of Life" Scholarship Awards, given out to the four contestants who've done the most to further their chosen "platform" or cause. All four of these super-achiever ya-gotta-believers were very thoughtful and articulate, and what they've already accomplished in their short little lives is mind-boggling. While most of their peers were getting wasted and listening to reprehensible rap music, they were vaccinating babies in Outer Mongolia or teaching retards how to tie their shoes. I couldn't decide if they were all great or if the rest of us just plain ol' SUCK.

One of the award recipients was also this year's token Handicapped Contestant: Miss Iowa, who was born without a left hand. Yet even though she bravely and brazenly showed off her stump while parading around in her swimsuit during the telecast (one of the few truly sexy moments in a show that was otherwise as sexy as an issue of *McCall's*), she was wearing this scary looking, Dr. Strangelove-like fake hand while accepting her award — presumably so she could HOLD the damn thing, but it sure made her "I'm just like everybody else" speech sound a lot weirder than I think she intended.

After having several interview requests with my home state representative Miss Washington ignored (that prissy little pug-nosed brat!), I told the fussy matrons that I'll interview anyone, "even Miss Delaware." This scored me a lot of points with the fussies, since con-

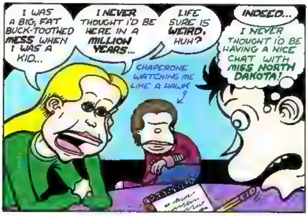


testants from the smaller northern states in particular have very little press following them around, and they tend to feel neglected as a result (though Miss Delaware ignored my interview requests as well, that stuck-up little so-'n'-so!).

Miss Michigan, Che'vonne Burton, was exactly what I expected: been entering pageants since she was 12; wants to be an actress; "simply THRILLED to be here" and so on. She's only 18 though, and the youngest of all the contestants by far, so for that reason alone I cut her some slack... The most amazing thing about her is that she's a black girl from Detroit CITY ("NOT the sissy suburbs"), yet she had no "street" in her accent at all. She talks and acts like Audrey Hepburn! But then, that place was crawling with Eliza Doolittles...

Speaking of Audreys: Miss Alaska, Audrey Solomon, was a surprise. She plays, studies and teaches classical violin, and was there mainly for the much needed scholarship dough — "as well as to promote the cause of bringing music and art programs back to public schools," she quicky added. As worthy a cause as any, no doubt, but she still seemed a little uncomfortable being there...

The same went for Miss North Dakota, Carrie Haberstroh. She's attending Harvard, but her folks are poor, and her athletic scholarship is just a drop in the bucket tuition-wise. So figuring she had nothing to lose and a few bucks to gain, she entered her home state's pageant contest and won. No one was more surprised than she was: "I'm really not a 'pageant girl' at all," she insisted, and I believe her, since she obviously was slightly embarrassed by all this Miss North Dakota jazz.



She was getting a kick out of it at the same time, though: "I'm having fun, and the other girls are cool... it's all been worth it."

They never put down the competition, nor did they ever forget to give The Miss America Organization the thumbs up, in spite of my best efforts to get them to make fun of it. Smart girls! Smarter than ME, anyway..

Much to my amazement, Miss California — Rita Ng — agreed to an interview with me. Amazed because she was very in demand, and clearly a front runner: One of *Glamour* Magazine's "Top 10 Women Students of the Year" who just graduated from Stanford with a 3.9 average; a pre-med student who has done health-related volunteer field work in various third world hellholes; a talent finalist who performed a VERY ambitious Beethoven piece on the piano... AND she's cute. Yet here she is taking time out of her busy life to talk to me, Mr. Cooties.

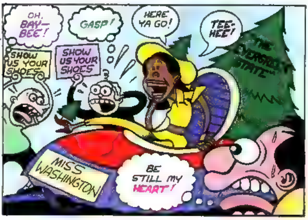
Little Miss Accomplishment talked so fast that her mouth could hardly keep up with her words. She's a total nerd, which to me makes her even cuter, if not very Miss America-like. Still, I was convinced that she was going to win, and I told her so. "Aww, you're sweet!", she squeaked, but I assured her that I wasn't trying to be sweet: "You've got the looks, the talent AND the résumé — plus there's never been an Asian Miss America before. You said so yourself! Don't discount the politics, Girlie!," I blurted.

Suddenly she looked like her ulcer was acting up. She clearly didn't appreciate the suggestion that she'd be benefiting from tokenism — she's worked hard for everything she's ever earned, goshdarnit — nor does she share my cynical world view in general. "The Miss America Pageant has been a wonderful opportunity for me," she responded robotically. AT that I excused myself, feeling like the bastard child of H. L. Mencken and Don Rickles.

On the three nights prior to the televised pageant there are "preliminary shows" that are almost as elaborate as the Grand Finale itself. They even featured their own celebrity host: The One and Only John Davidson, who would kick the shows off by singing and dancing to some Kool and the Gang song like a complete maniac. He then spent the next 15 minutes making a lot of jokes at his own expense, some of them even rather ribald and innuendo-laden. Everyone's "honest to a fault," these days, it seems. Social propriety has become a thing of the past, even at the Miss America Pageant.

These preliminary shows are when the various category winners are selected, thus narrowing down the playing field for the final telecast (which is why the rest of you never got to witness the hair-raising spectacle of the christian bookstore employee Miss Idaho singing a passionate operetta in Italian. She sang it well, too, but MAN did she scare me). The judges at each show pick a winner in the following categories: Talent, Swimsuit (aka: "Physical Fitness"), and "Evening Wear" — and if you're as confused by the importance of the latter as I am, keep in mind that the Miss America's own polls reveal that Evening Wear is considered the MOST IMPORTANT CATEGORY OF ALL to most pageant fans. Something to do with "poise," I'm told. (My own hunch is that pageant hounds simply can't get enough of pretty ladies with fancy-shmancy dresses on, but what do I know?)

Another bizarre tradition of the Pageant is the annual "Shoe Parade," which is held the day before the main event along Atlantic City's Boardwalk. Each state's delegation supervises the construction of an elaborate float (i.e.: Idaho's is a big potato, Florida's is a giant orange, etc.), which their state's contestant rides in and waves while wearing an equally elaborate outfit — especially when it comes to their SHOES, which are supposed to be the *pièce de résistance* of their entire get-up.

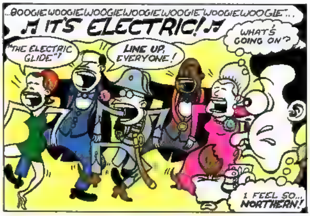


"Fancy Shoes" seems to be a common motif at the Pageant, in that even the entrance to the Convention Hall itself features an amazing display of CHOCOLATE SHOES that some mad local chocolatier concocts every year. To the innocent-minded it's all an obvious reference to the Cinderella Theme that the Pageant embodies, though there's another "tradition" that sullies that notion: the rows of sweaty middle-aged male "shoe enthusiasts" who line the parade route year after year with homemade signs saying "Show Us Your Shoes!," while the naive contestants happily oblige. GROSS!

This is the second year that the brother and sister act of Donny and Marie Osmond will be hosting the Miss America Pageant. "Only it's not to be called a 'pageant' any more," Donny informs us. "It's just 'Miss America' now." (ABC's focus groups must have revealed that the public will watch a pageant only if they DON'T KNOW it's a pageant.)

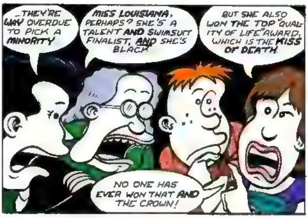
Donny and Marie promised a continuation of last year's show: faster, louder, more up-to-date. You know, COOLER. And they'd be wearing black leather sports coats just in case there was still any doubt about their Cool Agenda, while they simultaneously engaged in their self-deprecating Regis and Kathie Lee-like banter that they perfected on their now-defunct daytime TV show. Cool!

Marie liked the idea of narrowing the focus of the show down to the 10 finalists (while leaving the 41 other contestants out in the cold), "so we can get to know them better." That is, if we aren't too distracted by the addition of the now-omnipresent Hunky Male Dancers; or aren't thoroughly blown away by "O-Town," the finalists of the Reality TV show "Making the Band." What conceptual synergy! And the kids are sure to dig it. They'd better! "Miss America needs to win back the younger audience," Marie confessed, and there's nothing quite like ruining a show in order to save it. After all, reviving sagging ratings is one of the greatest — as well as one of the COOLEST — American traditions of all!



Just before being seated for the telecast, I stumbled upon an invitation-only "Southern States Party," an annual pre-pageant to-do made up of the delegations from the former Confederacy (segregation is still their thing, apparently). Still, the bespeckled war nerds done up in full Confederate military regalia were about as effective at guarding the door as they were at winning a war of secession, since I had no trouble sneaking my Yankee ass past them and carpetbagging my way to some free food and drinks.

Pageants are a BIG DEAL to these Southerners, and it shows. Everyone at this party was dressed to the nines, and absolutely giddy with excitement. Most of their contestants still sport that traditional "pageant look" as well: tiny up-turned noses, hairspray-heavy 'dos; and they all exhibit that southern belle "I simply ADORE your dress!" demeanor that reeks of insincerity even when they're being sincere.



They also hoot and holler like crazy for Their Girls whenever the spotlight is on one of them, as if they were at a college football game. While Miss Kentucky was answering a question during the telecast about Aids Awareness she was drowned out by her own cheering section, as they blew whistles and shouted "Go, Kentucky! Woof! Woof! Woof!"

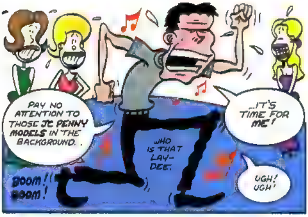
The press booth was filled with reporters from the smallest of small town papers, sent to cover their local girl's moment in the sun ("How often does a girl from Tracy, California wind up on national television?", said one excited Jimmy Olsen type). They were all dressed up as well, and totally caught up in the whole pageant vibe — save NYC/LA based reps from the major media outlets, who were all defiantly wearing t-shirts and black leather sports coats to make sure everyone knew that they're too-hip-for-this-bullshit, MA-AN (just like Donny and Marie! Cool!)

We all were weighing odds on who would win. I was still betting on Miss California, but these three goofy teenage boys from a radio show called "Teen Talk USA" were not only rooting for Miss Illinois, they were also madly in love with her. "She's, like, totally funny and stuff. You could, like, totally TALK to her and stuff." A documentary filmmaker confirmed their assessment: "Miss Illinois is AWESOME," he said.

But a woman reporter who knew a thing or two about pageants said she didn't have a chance. "Miss Illinois has too much HAIR," she opined. "It would never hold up if they elected her Miss America, the way they run her ragged all over the country from one fundraiser to the next."

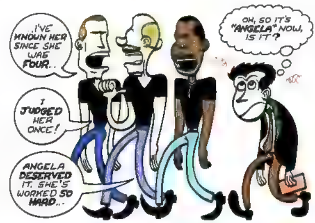
It turned out our resident hair expert was correct, since we soon learned that Miss Illinois didn't even make it as a finalist. The Teen Talk guys were ready to trash the place. "She's still OUR Miss America!" they declared.

As promised, the live telecast had plenty of high-tech razzle-dazzle. It also sucked. The noisy, "futuristic" hip-hop music it opened with didn't jibe at all with the corny "glamour" shots of the contestants it was accompanying. NOTHING jibed in this production: rather than successfully combining the old with the new, the two aesthetics just clashed, while the show-offy professional male dancers (i.e.: a bunch of fruits dressed in tough guy "gangsta" clothes) pranced around and even IN FRONT OF the contestants, totally stealing the limelight from the poor girls as they struggled to remember their cues and markers. I could just imagine the director thinking: "This would be a great show if it weren't for those stupid beauty contestants!"



Then there was "O-Town." OY! What a travesty! These guys' harmonies were as flat as a board, and they were LIP-SYNCING! Even Miss Montana's off-key power ballad to Jesus would have been ten times better than this... And don't even get me started on Donny Fucking Osmond and his Michael Jackson rip-off dance moves. Didn't he undergo therapy years ago to get over his MJ-wannabe complex? If he did it didn't stick. GET OFF THE STAGE, OSMONDS! YOU SUCK!

The Girls were robbed. I never gave a crap about the Miss America Pageant and I still don't, but that doesn't change the fact that this was SUPPOSED to be a rare opportunity for a bunch of regular gals to be TV stars for five seconds, only to be shoved aside by a a bunch of hammy GUYS and their "cool" singing and dancing. "Boooo!" is all I have to say. "BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"



By the time they had narrowed the field down to 5 finalists, Miss California was still in the running and I was feeling more confident in my pick than ever. But my short-lived reputation as a pageant picker was shattered when she was declared the second runner up! Then Miss Louisiana was announced first runner up, leaving... MISS HAWAII?!?

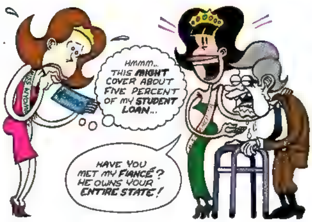
I was barely even aware of Miss Hawaii (or Angela Perz Baraquio, to be exact) during the preliminaries, though she certainly made a good impression when it counted the most ("She turned her GLOW BUTTON up a notch," our resident pageant/hair expert commented). Plus I did call it when I said it was high time for an Asian-American to win, since we do have the Wen Ho Lee scandal to apologize for, after all. I just picked the WRONG Asian-American.

Of course, now I could hear everyone in the Hall claiming that they had her pegged all along. The Power of the Crown was working its magic already!

The contestants often would say that "we're ALL winners in the end," since the least amount they walk home with is $5000 (on top of what they already won in their state and local pageants). Still, when you consider how they're all put through the paces for the three weeks leading up to the telecast — as well as anywhere from a year to a lifetime's worth of preparation — that money doesn't seem like much of a "prize." It's hard earned income!

They're providing ABC with three hours worth of free prime-time eye candy, which to my mind smacks of exploitation. I don't know how much the ABC/Disney corporation contributes to the non-profit Miss America Organization (which doled out $35 million is scholarships alone last year), but you'd think they'd want to make sure that the contestants on the telecast "win" a lot more than a paltry five grand.

You also have to wonder what the contestants really expect to get out of this in the long run, aside from the experience itself. Several previous winners have gone on to high-profile careers (such as Lee Meriwether and Phyllis George), but most of them seem content to marry a politician or Texas oilman and fade into comfortable obscurity.



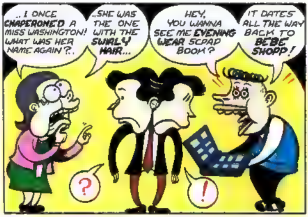
The talent competition in particular has a very Victorian "finishing school" feel to it, as if the ultimate goal of all of their efforts is to land a good husband. During the preliminaries the reigning Miss America, Heather French, pointed out her fiancé in the audience, as the spotlight landed on this pudgy, balding, middle-aged doctor. Typical! Aah, but I'm sure he's a nice guy, and her mother must be thrilled, so I should mind my own business...

No one wants to believe me when I say the contestants I met were nice, especially other women. "They were just ACTING nice! That's their JOB!" Ohhhh-kay... well, they sure are good at their job, then! Seriously though, most of them were sincerely likable, and not at all the plastic, Barbie-doll phonies that one would expect them to be (in fact, a few of them would even be considered by most people to be downright homely).

They are cut from a different cloth than most girls-next-door, though, what with their desperate desire to be thought of as all-around terrific in every way imaginable. I sure don't relate to that mentality — it looks EXHAUSTING — but to each their own. Who am I to judge? I'm just some smart-alecky asshole, and most likely so are you.

Like most smart-alecks, when I thought of The Miss America Pageant at all I thought of it as something vaguely EVIL, or at least incredibly stupid. But it isn't evil OR stupid, and I really have to wonder now how I or anyone else ever got so carried away in thinking otherwise. It's just one more form of entertainment; a glitzy three hour long game show, and getting bent out of shape over the winner supposedly representing "all of American Womanhood" just means you're falling for the pageant's own hype. People who try to politicize beauty pageants or spitefully point out flaws in Miss Utah's thighs really ought to invest their energies elsewhere. Go teach some "at risk youth" how to read! That's what Miss America would do!

The Pageant is ultimately just about the Pageant, just as the WWF is really only about wrestling, and the Indy 500 is both for and about people who like to see fast cars go varoooom. Miss America is an "evil" institution only if you insist on making it out to be one. Otherwise it doesn't mean anything to anybody other than to people who love to look at pretty ladies with make-up and fancy dresses on. •



IN DEFENSE OF
(AND PRAISE FOR)
MIKE LOVE

When I was still just a kid back in the 1960s, The Beach Boys posed something of a dilemma for me. The sound of their music appealed to me, but I was simultaneously turned off by their squeaky clean, fun-in-the-sun image. Even when I was 10 years old I fancied myself an outcast. I resented jocks and cheerleaders and anyone else who seemed well-adjusted and "normal," and they seemed to be the people that the Beach Boys were making music for.

However, my best friend at the time had a hip, eccentric uncle who took notice of our obsessive passion for pop music, and he encouraged us to forget about all that cars and surfboard stuff and to let the Beach Boys' music speak for itself. So we did, and by the early '70s they become my favorite group. I liked EVERYTHING they did: *Pet Sounds, Holland, Surfin' USA*; ALL of it. Not only did I love their singing, but I was also fascinated by the chameleon-like way they continually reinvented themselves all the while remaining insanely cheery proponents of whatever it was they were selling at that moment, whether it was Hawaii's killer waves or TM or practical footwear. I loved their entire shtick.

I also saw them perform live back in 1973, and that concert remains the most amazing musical performance I've ever seen in my life. They sounded fantastic, and their distinct personalities were on full display as well, particularly Mike Love's and Dennis Wilson's. The latter wasn't even drumming for the band at the time, so he just wandered about the stage like a drunken ghost, singing a little here, plinking on a piano there, and occasionally admonishing an audience that still and always consisted primarily of jocks and their cheerleader dates to "shut the fuck up" during the ballads. "Al just did a beautiful job on 'You Still Believe in Me,' and you idiots weren't even listening!" he bellowed. Not very professional behavior, even though I wanted them to shut the fuck up, too! But such is the nature of live rock music, and Mike Love the world's ultimate cheer leader — understands this as well as anyone, as he led the audience in one big sing-along medley of their rockin'-est and best loved hits. It was as corny as hell, but it was also great. These songs were the main reason — and for many, the only reason — we were all there, and to hear them performed by the band that made them at the height of their musical powers was a thoroughly satisfying experience. He gave the people what they wanted, and we were all better off for it!

Being a Beach Boys fan at that time wasn't an easy task, though, since by that time EVERYONE considered themselves to be a hippie and a "rebel," and the negative attitude I had towards them at the height of their success was now shared by the entire universe. The Beach Boys were uncool, and it was hard to explain to my peers why they should consider them otherwise. Unlike now, when almost everyone I know seems to have a deep love — or at least a grudging respect for the Beach Boys' music. Make that BRIAN WILSON'S music, since some folks seem to have an even harder time of separating their music from their image than I did (they probably resented jocks and cheerleaders even more than I did), so the only way they can justify getting into the Beach Boys at all is by fancying themselves as Brian Wilson fans first, and Beach Boys fans second (if at all). They could never appreciate their music at face value, but could only get into them after they heard about all the VH1 horrors that they went though as children, as well as the psychic price that Brian wound up paying for his own success.

It's Brian's story that so many poor, misunderstood, hyper-sensitive idealists can't get enough of. Not only was Brian the main musical genius behind all those great records, but he's also that most romantic type of Genius: the Idiot Savant, the Tortured Soul. He's become the straight male nerd's Judy Garland. Hey, who DOESN'T love a gifted retard (assuming you don't have to live or work with one, that is)? This Lovable Eccentric (so the legend now goes) was only interested in expressing himself through his music, ma-an, only people around him couldn't leave this Goose who Laid the Golden Records alone and nearly killed him because of it. He "just wasn't MADE for these times," MA AN! He's too GODDAMNED BEAUTIFUL for this world! *Sob!*

It's a great story, ya gotta admit, and it even has a loud ring of truth to it, assuming you want to believe that selling tons of records wasn't always a prime interest of Brian's as well. But like all great legends that feature a hero, victim or martyr, there has to be a Villain. And in the Legend of Brian Wilson, the man who has been cast as the villain is his cousin and former band mate, Mike Love.

On the surface Brian Wilson and Mike Love are polar opposites. Mike Love is by all accounts an arrogant, charmless asshole, and I have no reason to doubt that this is true. While Brian spent years rolling around in a sand box stuffed to the gills on LSD and forgetting what day or even what year it was, his cousin is a health nut and control freak who gave up booze and drugs years before it was fashionable to do so. Yet in spite of all this clean livin' Love also has a violent reputation, and is considered something of an unforgiving bully, while Brian is thought of as some big roly-poly teddy bear who loves everyone to pieces.

And while we're at it, let's get some of Mike Love's many other well-documented "crimes" out of the way: That he's a shameless egomaniac who never tires of tooting his own horn, in spite of the fact that his voice had the least range of any of the other original Beach Boys, and he never became proficient at playing a single musical instrument while his band mates could all play many; that he's notoriously litigious, and his need and desire for money seems to be bottomless thus, whenever a battle is raged over commercial pandering vs. musical experimentation, he argued for the former almost every

Model sheet for a proposed Beach Boys animated cartoon from the mid-'70s. Note the lack of beards: "Mustn't frighten the kids!"

time (which isn't always a bad thing necessarily, which I'll get to later). He also is an active and longtime member of the Republican Party. So if it came down to spending any time with either Mike or Brian, I think most of us would chose Brian hands down.

The thing is this: most of us will never have the opportunity (let alone the desire or intention) to hang out with either of these two fellows, so what they're like as people is ultimately meaningless to us as far as their musical legacy is concerned. All that matters is what we hear, think and feel when we play their records, and that's why I'm amazed and appalled so many of these "back door" Beach Boy aficionados, the very ones who used to be unable to separate the band's music from their All-American image, are now unable to separate Mike Love's art and contributions to the band from his own reputation as a human being. They claim to like the Beach Boys in SPITE of Mike Love, and in no way BECAUSE of him. This annoys me greatly for two reasons: one is because these "back door" types also tend to be the same people who write reviews and liner notes and post on message boards, so their opinions tend to become ersatz "facts" when left unchecked; and two: not only am I a fan of Mike Love's music, but I can't see how anyone who claims to hate him can also be a sincere fan of the Beach Boys. To me the two are inseparable, and that's because of Love, and not in spite of him.

To begin with, Mike's ambitions and musical sensibilities were never really as "at odds" with his cousins as 40 years of bickering and "band shit" would make it appear to be. The Beach Boys never would have lasted as long as they did otherwise! And for all their differences in personality, Mike Love and Brian Wilson have a LOT in common. For one thing, they're both completely insane. But it's the GOOD kind of insane (for an artist type, at least), in that they both feel a mad compulsion to act out on all their mad ideas and whims, in spite of what the average Joe might think of them because of it. They have absolutely no sense of shame whatsoever, and never did.

Brian and Mike also were both extremely fickle, faddish and compulsive. When they got into something they REALLY got into it: they'd write songs about it, create BANDS about it, tell the ENTIRE WORLD about it! Right from the start their music exhibited a very strong obsessiveness, in that their second LP was almost entirely about surfing, while their fourth LP was entirely about CARS (this in spite of the fact that they still called themselves the BEACH Boys, a mere technicality that they always managed to ignore). That fickle obsessiveness continued throughout their career, and it particularly exemplifies almost everything that Brian and Mike have written, whether they're collaborating or not.

To my ears it's almost impossible to tell Mike and Brian's lyrics apart. They're both incredibly CORNY, for one thing. And funny. And gimmicky and sentimental. And they're almost ALWAYS selling something: school spirit, cool water, yummy carob cookies, etc., etc., etc.... Their songs are always ABOUT something, which is amazing when you consider that so many of their '60s peers specialized in poetic vagueness, daring the listener to guess at what the song is really about, whereas when Brian and/or Mike write a song called, say, "Add Some Music to Your Day," you can be pretty sure that that song is going to be about adding some music to your day! Their lyrics are as literal as you can get. No guessing required!

The irony is that when Brian is credited with writing such lyrics they're considered wacky, imaginative and eccentric, while when Mike gets the credit they're dismissed as pedestrian and dumb. Even in Brian's case this type of material is simply considered filler in comparison to what's generally considered by most critics to be his two masterpieces: 1966's *Pet Sounds* LP and 1967's unfinished *Smile* LP, the music from which can all be heard on subsequent LPs and CD collections. Not only is the lyrical content of the former much more serious and weightier on the former (and "artier" and experimental on the latter) than anything the Beach Boys have done before or since, but Brian collaborated with lyricists other than Mike Love (for the most part) on both, which would suggest that he was better off NOT working with his cousin. In fact, Love was rather vocal in his disapproval of the lyrics on both of these LPs at the time they were making them, which only adds to his reputation as a philistine and anti-Art — that he's the Anti-Brian!

Pet Sounds is indeed an artistic masterpiece, although it's taken most people 25-30 years to agree with that assessment, since with the exception of "Wouldn't it be Nice" and "Sloop John B" (the latter of which was included at the record company's insistence) it's not a very easy record to listen to all the way through. This isn't a party record. You have to be in the mood for it. You could hardly even categorize most of it as "rock"

music, for one thing. It mostly consists of baroque sounding ballads, with complex, convoluted arrangements; and the lyrics are rather pensive and introspective, to the point of being self-obsessive and maudlin. Brian has had his introspective moments going all the way back to 1963's "In My Room," but with *Pet Sounds* he decided to make such navel gazing the THEME of an entire LP! This sort of "departure" was unheard of for anybody to attempt, let alone the fun-in-the-sun Beach Boys, and the fact that Mike Love felt that it smacked of career-suicide doesn't seem like an unreasonable concern. Years after the fact, Love-bashers like to point this out as an example of his lack of vision and foresight, but one thing that Love predicted with 100% accuracy was that *Pet Sounds* would alienate a lot of their current fans and hurt their credibility with radio programmers, which indeed it did.

In classic compulsive Beach Boys fashion, Brian Wilson recruited a TOTAL STRANGER to help him with the lyrics on *Pet Sounds*. Brian apparently was so moved by the lyrics to a bank commercial (?!?!?) that he saw on TV that he tracked down the guy that wrote them, who turned out to be an ad agency copywriter named Tony Asher. I have no idea what Asher has done before or since *Pet Sounds*, and he certainly has no reputation as a great writer or creator on his own. What he did possess that the other Beach Boys didn't, however, was a college education. He knew what words like "ego" and "ennui" and "existentialism" meant, and thus was able to help Brian express the convoluted emotions he was feeling at the time in a more literate fashion than Brian could have done on his own, let alone by collaborating with a former gas station attendant like Mike Love.

So it came as no surprise that Love was agitated when he first heard some of these new songs. Sure, he was threatened by the appearance of yet another new rival cutting into his song-writing royalties, but he didn't exactly relate to this high-falutin' hoo-hah either. While Love and the rest of the band were out on the road selling Brian's records and adding to HIS royalty checks night after night, Brian was sitting around doing drugs and gettin' all philosophical 'n' shit with college-boy Asher. "Hang On to Your Ego"? What the hell does THAT mean?!? Personally, I STILL don't know what it means, 35 years later! The only "sense" I can make of the original lyrics to that song (which Love re-fashioned into what became "I Know There's an Answer") is that like most conscientious ego-maniacs, Brian was mortified by the size of his own ego, and thus tried to claim that he had his under control, or denied that he had one altogether. The fact that he allowed Mike to re-write these lyrics at all suggests to me that Love called bullshit on his cousin, which is why Brian gave in.

All of the above happened all over again — and then some — a year later when Brian collaborated with a young odd-ball composer/arranger named Van Dyke Parks on the bulk of the music for what was to be the Beach Boys' next LP, *Smile*. By all accounts, Mike Love REALLY balked when he came back from the road to hear what these two drug addled lunatics had been cooking up in his absence. While much of it was inspired and even borderline brilliant, these new "songs" were barely songs at all, but rather were endlessly repetitive snippets that neither Brian or Parks were quite sure how to assemble into a workable whole. It's for this reason that I'm sure Brian wound up shelving the entire project, since the task of editing it down to something presentable was a daunting one indeed. He managed to do so with when he released "Heroes and Villains" into a functional three-and-a-half minute single, but in doing so he had to throw away a lot of great material from what was originally an 11-minute "Heroes & Villains" "theme." The thought of wrestling with the other dozen or so musical "themes" that he and Parks came up with must have seemed daunting indeed, especially since Brian most likely could no longer always remember what he had in mind when they started recording some of this self-indulgent nonsense in the first place!

And then there were the lyrics. If *Pet Sounds* was a "departure" for the Beach Boys, *Smile* was a 180-degree turn. Carl Wilson once accurately described V.D. Parks' lyrics as "airy fairy," and Parks has admitted himself that the lyrics he wrote for *Smile* don't mean a goddamned thing. He was just "painting with words," as was the mode of the day back in 1967. But unlike the more talented lyricists of that time, his lyrics usually didn't even do a good job of creating imagery in the listener's head. At least to me they don't. They're all just a bunch of fancy words cobbled together, and it's up to the music alone to create a feeling or mood. The lyrics were just along for the ride. And this, to Mike "teen poem" Love, was the very antithesis of what a Beach Boys song — or ANY song, for that matter — is supposed to be all about.

Another problem with the material Wilson and Parks came up with together for *Smile* was that it wasn't rock music AT ALL. As is the case with Parks' own solo material, much of the musical stylings and instrumentation harkens back to a much earlier era — as far back as the 1890s, even — with occasional overly ambitious attempts at Aaron Copland-like pomposity. Brian himself had always been brilliant at taking unconventional instruments

Carl's hungry!

(like he did so famously with a cello and theremin on "Good Vibrations") and turning them into "rock" instruments, but the same cannot be said for the *Smile* tracks. Here such cornball, old fashioned sounding instruments such as the clarinet and the xylophone are used as they've always been used, which is to make corny, old fashioned sounding music.

Not that there's anything inherently wrong with that, of course, only that wasn't their intention. Their intent was to be "avant garde" and create something new out of the old for The Youth of Today to get into, and on that score they utterly failed. This was also VERY problematic when you're writing it for an established act like the Beach Boys, who happen to be a ROCK band. Sure, they never were the most rockin' band around, but their fan base still consisted almost entirely of restless, easily bored teenagers who not surprisingly want to ROCK OUT when they go to a "rock" concert. Could anyone really expect Mike Love to sing this meaningless, cornball, Victorian music without a word of complaint?!?

To listen to Van Dyke Parks talk now, the answer is yes. How DARE Love criticize our legendary, critically acclaimed music? Of course, it wasn't critically acclaimed by anyone at the time they were making it (though there was plenty of hype surrounding *Smile* during its creation). At the time his response to Mike Love's criticisms was to concede everything and then turn and flee, leaving Brian to fend for himself. Maybe the diminutive Parks thought Love was going to beat him up, which may not have been an unreasonable fear. But now that he's got three decades' worth equally wimpy Love-hating music critics backing him up he's not the least bit afraid to tell Love what he REALLY thinks of him! Through the media, that is, not face to face. The pussy.

The amazing thing is this: Not only DID Mike Love wind up singing this stuff, but he sang it beautifully. As was the case with *Pet Sounds* before it, these aren't simple "Barbara Ann"-like singalong songs we're talking about. They were and remain the among the most ambitious and complex vocal arrangements ever heard on a rock record, involving hours and hours of painstaking rehearsals and retakes. I urge anyone who has access to it to listen to Mike Love's performance on the long version of "Heroes and Villains": there he is, Mr. Philistine, not only singing these difficult melodies and harmonies and STUPID, PRETENTIOUS lyrics that run counter to his entire belief system, but singing them with style and gusto. And almost all of it wound up on the cutting from floor! The ENTIRE ALBUM wound up on the cutting room floor as a result of some massive drug-fueled paranoid anxiety attack on Brian's part. All that labor down the drain, just because Brian the Artist suddenly realized that *Smile* would never sell nearly as well as *Sgt. Pepper* (which, in spite of all of ITS artistic pretensions, was still a "rock" record). So rather than compete with the Beatles, Brian turned his band into irrelevant non-entities in one fell swoop. Way to go, dude! Far from Love and the others standing in the way of Brian's creativity, they gave him WAY TOO MUCH leeway, thus giving him enough rope to hang himself and the rest of them along with him.

I always wondered why the Beach Boys didn't break up at this point (or why Mike Love didn't at least strangle his cousin). Yet in every book or article I ever read about them that possibility never even came up. Well, they were family, but rather than jumping ship once the going got rough they seemed to become tighter than ever during the next few years.

Love seemed to have become as whacked-out, creatively and otherwise, as his cousins at this point, in that while their next dozen or so records all were fine artistic endeavors to varying degrees, none of them came close to the commercial success that they enjoyed prior to 1967, and Love seemed as clueless as the rest of them when it came to figuring out how to reclaim that success.

By this point the Beach Boys became a democracy as well, rather than simply Brian Wilson and his Puppets. This gave the rest of them a chance to prove themselves as composers and producers — roles that Mike Love usually came up the shortest in, since as I already pointed out he was the least musically proficient. Still, as was the case with their earlier records, many of the most enjoyable songs during this post heyday era are ones that are co-written or sung by Love. I'll never forget the time I heard "Cool, Cool Water" (from 1970's brilliant *Sunflower* LP) being played on some groovy FM radio station at the time it came out. This re-worked *Smile* outtake is a very spacey, loosely arranged song full of lush, wistful harmonies, but being a non-rocker it only had half my attention at first — that is, until it came to a break where all the music stopped except for Love's a capella voice singing:

In an ocean, or
In a glass;
Cool water is
SUCH a gas!

That was it! I was hooked! I mean, of course I was laughing my head off at those hokey lyrics and Love's twangy voice, but from that moment on that song had my FULL attention! That was also when I decided that I had to start buying their LPs, figuring there had to be more of such whacked out brilliance like "Cool Cool Water" on them that was worlds away from "I Get Around." And I was right.

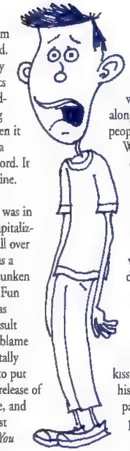
The first LP I bought by them was 1971's *Surf's Up*, which is one of their best — if not THE best LP the Beach Boys ever made (see sidebar). The entire record has a feel to it that is simultaneously soft yet intense; it's like "soft rock" that keeps you on the edge of your seat! The one song that breaks this mood, however, is "Student Demonstration Time," which is basically the old rockin' blues standard "Riot in Cell Block #9" with new "socially relevant" lyrics provided by Mike Love. This song is often looked upon as a black stain on the Beach Boys' career by most critics and aficionados for two reasons: One is that the lyrics seem to be a too deliberate and seemingly insincere attempt to "get down with the kids" who were protesting the Vietnam War at the time; and the other is because its jar-

Brian hard at work.

ring, raucous-y production is too abrupt a contrast from the rest of the LPs' carefully constructed "gentle" sound.

Both of these criticisms are totally valid, but they ignore two very important points: One is that the lyrics are pretty funny, and the other is that it's a great sounding, well-performed rock tune with a terrific, blistering lead guitar! It was my FAVORITE song on the LP when it first came out for that very reason, since it took us all a while to fully appreciate the "quieter" songs on the record. It was like a combination of hard rock and MAD Magazine. What's NOT for a 13 year old to like?

By the mid-'70s, nostalgia for the pre-hippie era was in full swing, and the Beach Boys were unable to resist capitalizing on it. Their early hits were selling in the millions all over again, and they suddenly were very much in demand as a concert attraction as well — although it was mostly drunken frat boys and sorority sisters who just wanted to hear "Fun Fun Fun" that was flocking to see them. Mike Love was more than willing to indulge them anyway, and as a result became the whipping boy of their hard-core fans who blame him for the Beach Boys' "selling out." Again, this is totally ridiculous. For one thing, The Beach Boys continued to put out occasional LPs of new material, but ever since the release of 1973's *Holland* most of these LPs were pretty mediocre, and this was not entirely Mike Love's fault. In fact, the most embarrassing record of all was 1977's *Beach Boys Love You* LP, which was almost entirely written by a supposedly rejuvenated Brian Wilson.



Love You is a bizarre and occasionally (though seemingly unintentionally) hilarious LP. It's also a piece of shit. Its production level is that of a sloppy demo (which indeed is what it was), and the singing and harmonizing on it is atrocious. Thus the two qualities that one could always expect from a Beach Boys record — beautiful singing and flawless production standards — are completely lacking on this thing, which makes me wonder why it ever was released in the first place. The reason it WAS released was mainly to serve as "therapy" for Brian Wilson, sadly. Brian had become a mental and physical wreck by this point, so "drastic measures" were being employed by his family and therapist to get him back in the swing of things. Plus the band hoped that their newfound popularity would fuel Brian's confidence, and that having him back in the saddle might help them find their old gold record magic all over again. A win-win situation for all concerned! But MAN, they not have been more wrong.

So once again Mike Love found himself indulging his crazy cousin all over again, pouring his heart into odes to Johnny Carson — JOHNNY CARSON, f'r Godsake! — in the misguided hope that this was all for the best for some reason that doesn't even make any sense anymore. It was *Smile* all over again, only they weren't even making GOOD music by anyone's standards this time! These new lyrics — written mostly by Brian himself – were retarded, as in TOTALLY retarded, like an actual mentally retarded person wrote them: "If Mars has life on it, I might find my wife on it..." And Brian's own singing in particular sounded horrible. At this point Brian had became ashamed of his formally inimitable choirboy voice, and deliberately ruined it in a horrifically misguided attempt to sound more like Randy Newman, of all people. The end result was nothing short of a musical tragedy.

But Love went along with all of it anyway. They all did. Who knows what any of them was thinking at this point. Maybe he even LIKED this new music they were making! I've never heard him claim otherwise. Like I said before, they're all a bunch of obsessive/compulsive crazy people. Once they start heading in a certain direction they don't seem to be able to stop. What I find so odd, though, is how Love can be saddled with this sell-out/philistine reputation when at the same time he can take a willing part in such hopelessly non-commercial pieces of insanity as *The Beach Boys Love You*.

Mike Love Haters are also usually the same people who claim to love *The Beach Boys Love You*, which not surprisingly has become a "cult classic" along the lines of *The Shaggs*. I'm highly suspicious of people who claim to love this record, though. It's Brian Wilson at his lowest, for one thing. I feel like I'm examining his hemorrhoids when I listen to it. And like I said before, it's the antithesis of everything that made the best of the Beach Boys' music so amazing. Even at face value this record is an amusing novelty at best, and in the context of what they were capable of making it's a travesty. My gut reaction to anyone who claims to love *The Beach Boys Love You* is that deep down they still hate the Beach Boys.

During more recent days Mike Love has had several episodes that have helped seal his reputation as a butthead: His cringe-inducing tantrum of an acceptance speech at the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame (though hearing someone rag on his peers rather than kiss their asses made for an entertaining change of pace); his lawsuit against Brian Wilson over a greater share of past song-writing credits (which may have been a simple act of greed, but his case couldn't have been entirely groundless since he did in fact win); and the recent and highly rated TV docu-drama about the band's history, which many people feel was "orchestrated" by Love, and thus showed him in a better light than he deserved. He also recently sued Al Jardine — who he's been estranged from since Carl's death — for touring under the name "Beach Boys Family and Friends," since he claims sole right to the Beach Boys name — this in spite of the fact that he's the only original Beach Boy left in the "official" version of the band. Like I said before, I cannot deny that the guy sounds like a king-sized ass. Yet in classic crazy Beach Boys fashion, Brian joined Love in the suit against Jardine — this in spite of the fact that Brian's own daughters, Wendy and Carnie, were part of Jardine's touring troupe (thus constituting the "family" in the "Family and Friends" moniker)! So again I have to wonder how anyone can easily defining either of these two as the "good guy" and the "band guy." They just sound like a couple of nuts to me!

Mike Love is one of my all time favorite singers. He's an EXCELLENT singer! To criticize him for not having as much range as his band mates is insanely unfair, since NOBODY had the range that Brian, Carl or even Al Jardine had in their prime (and this criticism often comes from the same people who will praise people like Lou Reed or Bob Dylan or Neil Young to the high heavens, totally ignoring the fact that none of them can barely carry a tune). Yet for all of their range the other Beach Boys' voices don't communicate quite as directly as Love's does. The rest of them sang almost TOO well, in that they oftentimes sounded too angelic and not quite human. Love's nasally, almost Hank Williams/C&W vocal style added a casual, cozier HUMAN touch to the Beach Boys sound. It provided a perfect contrast to the other member's lead vocals — the songs where he shares the lead with Brian or Carl are always the most quintessentially "Beach Boys" sounding of the Beach Boys' recordings — while adding a much needed ballast to their harmonies.

As I said before, Love is also a natural born salesman, and this comes through in his singing delivery as well. He always sounds like he's standing right next to me, talking right into my ear when I hear him singing. His voice jumps out of the radio or record player and gets RIGHT IN YOUR FACE, but never in some screechy, obnoxious, punk rock way, since that wouldn't be good salesmanship. Instead he cajoles you into wanting to JOIN him on whatever new fun trip or fad he's into, and in fact his voice has convinced many to move to California, take up

surfing and/or practice TM as well as buy millions of Beach Boys records. So it's no coincidence that most of their biggest and most played hits are sung or co-sung by Mike Love. Even their biggest post-1960s hit, "Kokomo," was co-written and sung by him, without Brian Wilson being anywhere in sight. And yeah, I know, you hate that song because you're a smarty-pants hipster and that song is way too square for you, and you still associate it with the Tom Cruise vehicle that it was featured in. But my point is that a lot of people did like it, which goes to show that Love's voice has as much to do with the Beach Boys' success as Brian's musical genius.

I sometimes wonder what the Beach Boys would have been like if it were only the three Wilson Brothers and no one else. After all, they were the guitar/bass/drums nucleus of the group, and their sibling harmonies would certainly have sounded fantastic. Plus Brian, Carl and Dennis are the three members that most hardcore Beach Boys fans idolize and romanticize to an almost absurd degree, since they allegedly were the ones with "soul" and "artistic integrity." So I'm sure that many of them must have fantasized of this Wilsons-only scenario with heavy "if only" sighs.

I don't think it would have ever worked, though. For one thing, Brian and Dennis were notorious fuck ups, and being the youngest I doubt that Carl would have had much luck keeping them in line. Plus Carl and Dennis' own musical sensibilities tend to be rather unremarkable and pedestrian as witnessed by their own solo records (Beach Boys fans tend to greatly over rate Dennis' songwriting abilities — he's had his moments, but most of his compositions were insufferably maudlin, plodding ballads), while Brian could be terribly stubborn and self-indulgent when left to his own devices. They all WANTED fame and fortune, and had the talent to achieve it, but they lacked the focus and discipline that their cousin had. They all knew it too, or they would have kicked Mike Love out of the band ages ago. It was three against one, and Dennis in particular couldn't stand Mike, though Dennis hardly had the authority to kick out anybody. Yet if Carl was able to kick his own brother BRIAN out of the band (which he actually did at one point) he certainly could have given Love the heave-ho at anytime, but he never came close to doing so. He knew which side his bread was buttered on.

Talent is useless without content and context, and Mike Love always provided Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys with both. For 20 odd years Brian would often hook up with other collaborators (or "new best friends," as author Steve Gaines dubbed them), and produced great work with many of them, but he always would go back to working with his cousin. The concept of the Beach Boys was Brian and Mike's to begin with, and it provided all these other collaborators with a context to work with and bounce off of. Plus Mike and Brian were the same age, and both grew up in the same grim suburb in the same psychotic, dysfunctional family, so it's shouldn't be a surprise that the "purest" Beach Boy songs where always the ones they wrote together.

Love it or hate it, the Beach Boys represent an enduring image. They're an ICON, and icons are rarely created by accident. Somebody had to both think of it and BELIEVE in it first. Brian gave the band their substance, but Mike was the one with the almost single-minded vision of what the Beach Boys stood for, and continues to keep that image alive in spite of everything. For Brian, the Beach Boys were just a vehicle for his music, but for Mike Love the Beach Boys were and are — Everything. •

Carl Wilson, or the best producer of the Beach Boys (if not The World) wasn't Brian Wilson.

The Beach Boys hit rock bottom career-wise by 1969. They still were making good records, but they weren't selling very well and not much else was going for them. Spiritual leader and guiding light Brian Wilson was investing more time in his health food store by this point, while brother Dennis was hanging out and collaborating with the likes of Charles Manson, and Mike Love and Al Jardine's newfound obsession with TM was hardly as big a hit with the fans as surfing and cars were. In true kick-'em-while-they're-down fashion, Capitol Records only made a token effort to re-sign them, opening the door for the more "artist friendly" Warner Records to step in and offer them a sweetheart deal.

Warner's motives where hardly altruistic, of course. They were mainly gambling on the assumption that, given a new creative lease on life, Brian would breathe free and start working his old gold record magic all over again. The gamble never really paid off, since Brian only got fatter and lazier and more depressed over the next five years, though the Beach Boys continued to make excellent-if-underrated LPs created mainly under the musical guidance of the youngest Beach Boy of all, Baby Brother Carl.

It was Carl's passion for rock & roll that lead to the creation of the Beach Boys in the first place, since it was through his encouragement that he and his brothers and cousin formed a rock 'n roll band — rather than just a simple singing group (Brian and Mike were more interested in harmonizing like the Four Freshmen than rocking out like Chuck Berry in their younger days). He also was the most accomplished musician in the group, and once he was given the chance to try his hand at singing lead he rapidly became the group's most accomplished singer as well. Carl Wilson had an uncommonly beautiful and powerful voice — a voice that was responsible for the band's more inspired and spine-chilling moments. He may well be my favorite vocalist of all time. He was that good.

Carl also was reputed to have an amazing musical ear, and Brian often relied on him for advice and/or confirmation in the early days, and would only trust Carl to produce his own compositions when he himself couldn't be bothered. Aside from having perfect pitch, Carl also was something of a perfectionist, and as the musical leader of their touring band was responsible for their excellent live sound (at least up until '75 or so, when they basically became an oldies review band and he no longer cared as much).

As the late '60s wore on and a demoralized Brian faded farther into the background, the other Beach Boys took on more and more of the song-writing and record producing responsibilities, but Carl in particular really stood out and reveled in this role. While most of the production on their LPs from 1968 -'73 were credited to the entire group, 1969's *20/20* gave individual credit to each song, and the ones credited to Carl tend to be the stand-outs. Their cover of Phil Spector's "I Can Hear Music" was particularly inspired, in that not only was Carl able to recreate the flawless "shimmering" sound that Brian at his best used to create, but it also took full advantage of everything that stereophonic sound had to offer (something that Brian was never able to do, being deaf in one ear). It also served as a sampler of what was yet to come next year, when their debut LP for Warner, *Sunflower*, came out.

Sunflower is the most perfect and beautiful sounding LP I've ever heard. It has a richness and fullness and GLISTENING GOLDEN GOODNESS to its sound that hasn't been matched before or since. Every time I hear it I always wonder how they did it, especially since it was made way before there were any "sampling" or DAT machines and voice equalizers that allow people to make seamless and "flawless" records today. Perhaps Warner's made some state-of-the-art equipment available to them that Capitol didn't, but if so they certainly made the most of it. The tracks are very layered but never cluttered sounding, while the vocals sound like they're from Heaven.

The same goes for its follow-up, 1971's *Surf's Up* LP, which if anything is even more of a production marvel. The sound and performances are just as flawless on *Surf's Up* as they were on its predecessor, though the effect is not quite the same, since the overall tone of *Surf's Up* is much darker and moodier than it is on the super-sunny *Sunflower*. The music on it is still "pretty," but the songs cut much deeper and not just in terms of feel or content. The music and vocals are VERY multi-layered and complex on this LP, though like on *Sunflower* it never gets too busy or cluttered. And in spite of much of its rather eccentric content, it never sounds "quirky" or gimmicky. Each song simply sounds incredibly well done. It's got a crystal-like clarity to its sound that I've never heard anywhere else. In terms of production alone, *Surf's Up* is more than just a marvel. It's a miracle.

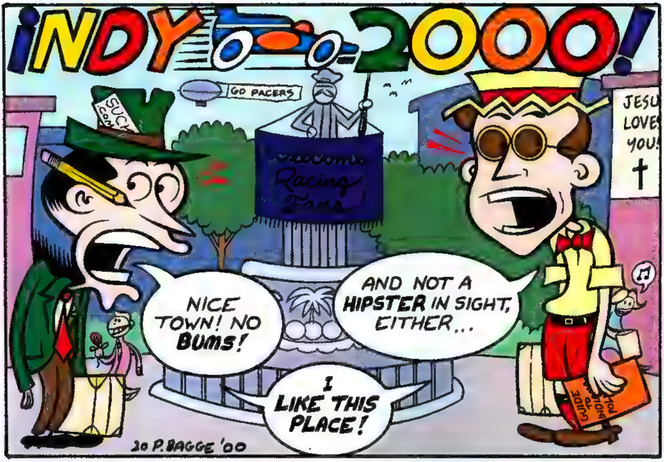
Carl has always been the least prolific songwriter of the Beach Boys, but whenever he did bother to write a song it usually was a stand-out. *Surf's Up* featured two songs penned by Carl (with lyrical assistance from their then-manager Jack Rieley): "Long Winding Road" and "Feel Flows," and both of them are musical masterpieces. What's more amazing is that he allegedly played all the instruments on both of them, yet neither has that "clumsy" or slightly amateurish sound that usually results when even the most talented musician attempts such auteurism, and his use of such usually attention-grabbing gizmos like moog synthesizers and wah-wah pedals are remarkably understated and effective. The lyrics to these songs, however, while inoffensive, really aren't about anything in particular. They just vaguely hint at some kind of "feeling." My hunch is that he just wanted the words to aid the music, rather than get in the way of it.

Even with the assistance of a collaborator, lyrics remained Carl's biggest weakness. Unlike his band mates (particularly Brian and Mike), he simply didn't seem to have anything to say. This became particularly obvious on his two rather boring solo LPs that came out in the late '70s. His one and only concern seemed to be to make good sounding music, and that he could care less what the songs were about. It's for this reason alone that his brother Brian was a far more commercially successful producer, let alone songwriter. For Brian, form always followed function, while for Carl form was EVERYTHING. He was a techno-geek, basically. A brilliant one, mind you, but a techno-geek nonetheless.

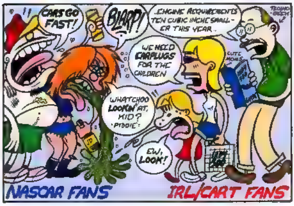
Unfortunately for Carl, the disappointing sales of *Sunflower* and *Surf's Up* — as well as their less magnificent yet still impressive follow ups, *So Tough* ('72) and *Holland* ('73), seemed to have taken a toll on his self-confidence much like the dissolution of *Smile* destroyed his brother Brian six years earlier. While the sales and critical acclaim these LPs received would have been more than enough to satisfy most bands, the Beach Boys were used to much, much more, and they had the spending habits and alimony payments to prove it. So by the time the mid-'70s nostalgia wave came along, Carl seemed as willing (if not as eager) to exploit it as the rest of the band.

To make matters worse, Carl — who was always considered the "normal" Beach Boy and the "glue that held them together" — began to have a lot of personal troubles by this point as well. Not that he ever quite gave his brothers a run for their money in the booze, drugs and women problems sweepstakes — not many people did! — but this could only have made it even more difficult, if not impossible, for him to do anything nearly as creatively impressive as what he accomplished in the early '70s (and it was a life-long tobacco addiction that finally did him in a few years ago).

Still, what Carl Wilson DID accomplish in that five year period was pretty goddamned impressive. So if any of you aren't familiar of the Beach Boys output from the '69- 73 "Carl Era," I'd advise you to make yourself familiar with it right away. You won't be disappointed. •



By Ben Schwartz • Illustrated by Peter Bagge and Eric Reynolds



For most SUCKsters, the Indy 500 is a Memorial Day weekend newsblip lost in-between barbecues, top 500 radio call-in contests, parades, and the novelty of staying up late drinking on a Sunday night. But the Indy 500 has been around for 84 years whether you care or not. So somebody out there in the heartland must be paying attention, and that got us curious. Figuring the average SUCK reader knows next to nothing about professional auto racing, we thought, "Who better than two stellar know nothings like Peter Bagge and Ben Schwartz to play our race card at...

INDY 2000!"

Let's get this straight, the Indy 500 is not NASCAR. The 500 is the crown jewel of American racing, and for Indiana, it's an annual celebration along the lines of the Kentucky Derby or Britain's Ascot, where everyone from the city elite to regular Joes turn out.

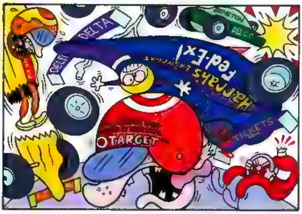
For instance, we met Bill, a Wall Street broker, investor, and pit crew member. Bill flies out for eight or nine races around the country every year. "A friend who knew the crew chief knew I was a fan and asked if I wanted to do it. That was nine years ago. During pit stops I clear the air hoses and tires out of the way. Only about two guys in any crew get paid. The rest volunteer. I invest money for this crew and two or three others."

Yep, Indy is a well heeled operation. Well, okay, we did meet these folks...

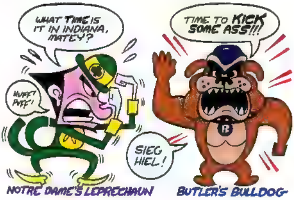
But, swear to God, they were the exceptions!

Auto racing is a throwback to another time. In today's world of CGI F/X "Gladiator" movies, player unions, and pro-wrestlers who happily admit it's all fake, Indy offers something else — The Real Thing. It harkens back to an era when Lillian Gish really ran across waterfalls for D.W. Griffith, when Ernest Hemingway sought wars, not deferments, and Ty Cobb sharpened his spikes for any infielder dumb enough to get in his way. Yeah, people expected a lot from their pop culture back then, and Indy racers still risk a lot — that is, their lives. No real fan wants to see anyone hurt. But the underlying fact that it could happen juices every second of a race. Racing was extreme before anyone ever heard of a snow board, and it remains our only sport where death is an accepted, oh let's face it, an expected feature of the event.

And Indiana is the perfect place for a do or die attitude. While the rest of us agonize over John Rocker's foul



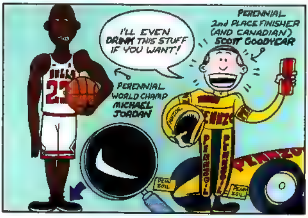
attitudes, Indiana is home to people like Bobby Knight, who sees it as his job to strangle teenagers to win basketball games. Indiana legends include the Jackson 5's *père*, Joe Jackson, who literally beat his own kids into the perfect pop group, or David Letterman and John Cougar Mellencamp, whose "The Show Is My Life" attitude has kept them both lonely, angry men. Even Notre Dame's "Fightin' Irish" mascot looks like a little bad ass. If the rest of the sporting



world has moved on, well, jeez, Indianans don't even bother with daylight savings time, so what do they care?

And Indy drivers need that attitude for more than the track, since the minute you get to Indy you realize they run two races here every year. There's the race to the finish line, and then there's the equally treacherous race to the starting line.

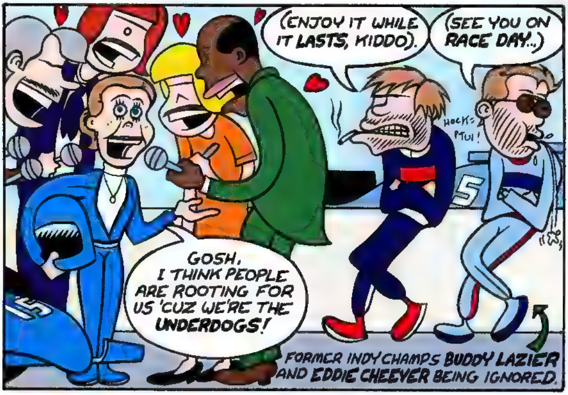
To even qualify for the 500, drivers need sponsors with important money. To maintain a car at Indy for the month of May it takes one million dollars, and every year, the race runs thirty-three cars. That's one reason the Michael Jordans of the world can ponder the ethics of wearing that little inch and half Nike swooshitka on their shoes, whereas Indy racers happily wallpaper themselves from butt to nose for that cash.

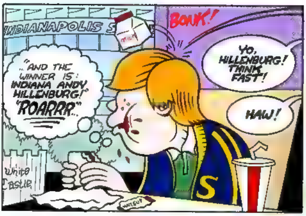


The easy winner of the sponsor race was 19-year-old Sarah Fisher, a tomboy sweetheart and instant media darling. Yes, she's a driver with legitimate potential, but her cute "Look Pa, I'm Playin' With The Big Boys" charm meant instant human interest for us media types — or would you rather read about carburetors for a month?

No one expected her to win her first 500, but if you're a corporate sponsor, you can't really count on getting your logo on the winning car. So why not get your name on the car that every news crew at the track will be cutting to for four weeks. As a driver she may not be a true contender, but in the PR battle Sarah and her machine left tire marks on the butts of dozens of other drivers in endless TV interviews and *People* magazine articles.

A distant second to Sarah in the the human interest angle was SUCK's official pick of the race, local yokel Andy Hillenburg, 37, who qualified for his first ever Indy

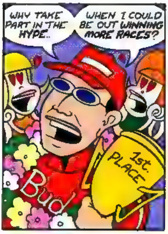




start. Unlike Sarah, Andy clawed his way to the top racing everything from lawnmowers and go-carts to get to Indy. As a kid, he used to sit outside the track at a White Castle hamburger stand and just dream and dream…

Sponsors are tough, but not for everyone. For instance, Johnnie Unser, Jr., scion of a famous racing family, gets in year after year even though he's never come close to winning. Even though his dad died at Indy, he chose to become a racer. This year he knew he wouldn't even come close, but he enters because he has a business out West and as active racer he draws more clients.

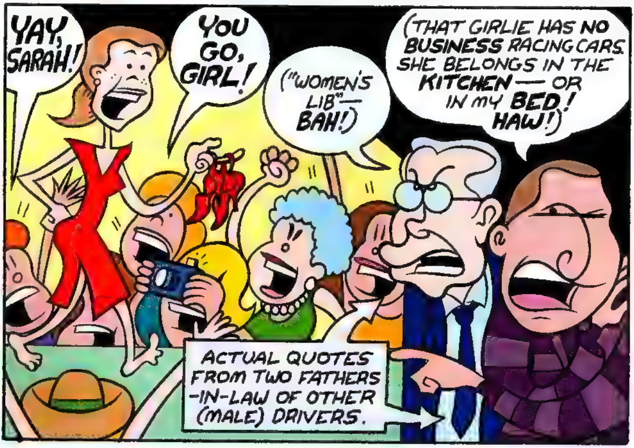
It's easy to qualify for the real cup contenders, but they've earned it. This year's odds-on favorite was Juan Montoya, a good looking Colombian driver, smug, with the arrogant air that he knew the damn thing was his. People respected him, but nobody liked him, and he happily snubbed all the Indy 500 pre-game events like the Memorial Day parade or the charity fashion show (see below). Montoya was too busy racing in Pennsylvania the day before the Indy 500 — while guys like Hillenburg rode on floats — to bother with the media race. And honestly, he didn't have to — he's that good.

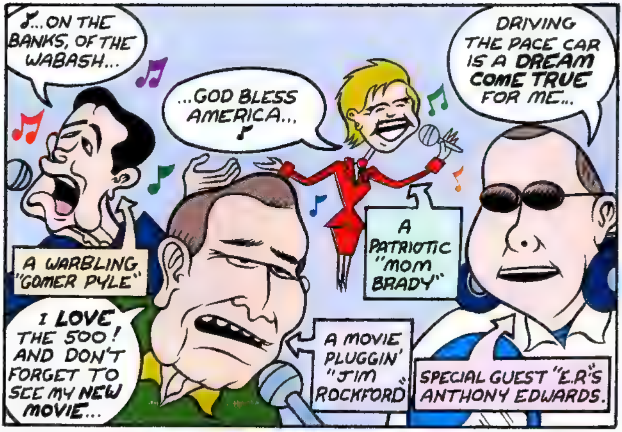


The height of the media pre-race has to be the annual Indy 500 fashion show for charity. Populated by the cream of Indianapolis' Ladies Who Lunch set, the show is chaired by three time Indy Champ Johnnie Rutherford and his wife. All the local lights come out in evening wear provided by a downtown department store to raise money for charities, one of which aids the families of dead and wounded drivers. Creepy, but the star of the show was, of course, Sarah Fisher, who got a standing ovation when she came out in a ballroom gown while carrying her high heels, a tomboy on the catwalk.

Hype? "Wim wam," you say? In reality, Indy needs Sarah Fisher more than Juan Montoya. The Indy Racing League (IRL) has lost a lot of star power to retirement, like A.J. Foyt, Rick Mears, Mario Andretti. The 500 also has to deal with recent consumer competition for the first time ever, since Indianapolis is now home to the Colts and Pacers, not to mention NASCAR's national presence.

But its real problem is the rival CART Racing League with whom Indy track owner George Hume, Jr. has a bitter feud. Hume took over the track from his dad





and set down rules that half the world's best racers won't follow. The Mario Andrettis of CART resent this modern day Georgie Amberson's dictates, and in a state where they won't even agree with you what time it is, this could go on a long time.

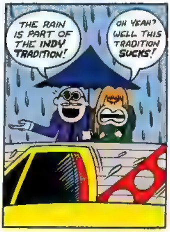
And this feud is the one reason sassy Sarah Fisher and Indiana Andy Hillenburg even got near the starting thirty three this year! It's like having a World Series where only the National League can show up because the American League wants to use aluminum bats.

After weeks of media hoo hah, big money deals, time trials, and starting positions, over 400,000 people jam into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Baton twirlers, college bands, and Hollywood star power keep everyone entertained until the official start.

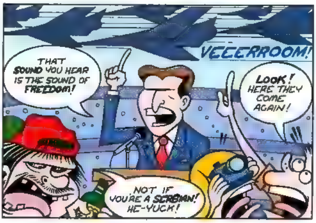
There was just one little glitch in the festivities...

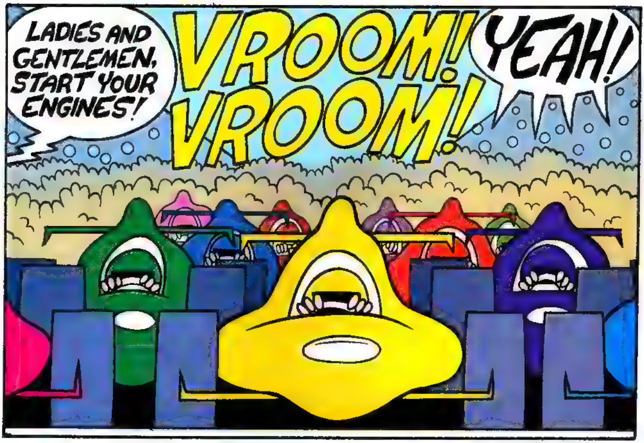
RAIN DELAYS! Yes, the curse of the Indy 500 is its infamous wet weather. If an Indy start is rained out the whole thing has to happen the next day, and some Indiana showers have delayed the race from Sunday to the following Wednesday.

And even if the rain does stop you have to wait for the track to dry since it's too dangerous to run the cars, which means Indy fans are treated to hours of trucks driving over the track to thin the water and then giant blow dryers which have to tidy up 2.5 miles of track.



The rain delay provoked one of the 500's oddest diversions, and one of the few reminders that it was a holiday weekend honoring vets. Secretary of Defense William Cohen greeted the crowd and had two US Harrier jets buzz the track for fun, a moment both cheered and jeered by fans.

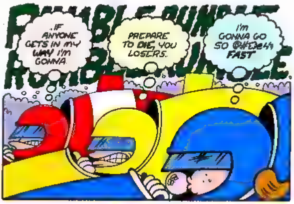




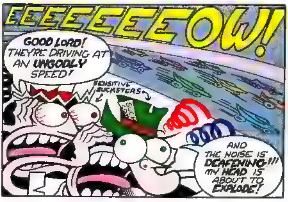
Eventually, with the track dry and Col. Kilgore's boys sent back to the hangar, the thirty-three took the field to the cheers of the crowd. It's no exaggeration that even to non-racing fans like Bagge and Blecht, the moment when the elder Mrs. Hume (the owner's mother) takes to the stand to make the race's traditional announcement, that the roar of those engines firing up ranks as one of the great moments in sports. No matter how far back you sit, their raw power rattles you down to your bones.

Show the cars, in formation, with that bone rattling noise shaking everyone silly and people putting in ear plugs and putting their fingers in their ears drinks spilling kids crying, etc.

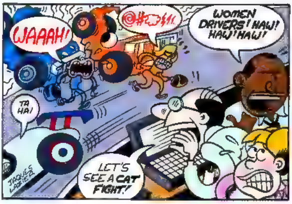
The cars then make two orderly laps around the track to warm up, ratcheting up the tension another notch. And when that second lap is hit, the green flag drops and the power of the cars, after weeks of tease, is finally unleashed. In seconds it's 1916 and these machines throw off a sense of barely controlled menace, like seeing a Bengal tiger face to face at the zoo. Yeah, you're on the other side of the bars, but that doesn't dissipate the awe, and the secondary knowledge, that anyone who would go in there — from grizzled vet to little miss Penelope Pitstop herself, Sarah Fisher — is a hardcase lunatic.



Once the green flag drops, the whole focus of the event shifts. The media center, previously populated by a lumpen press corps filing piffle on whether Sarah Fisher has a boyfriend or not, suddenly looks fit and lean, intensely focused on the actual contenders, the ones

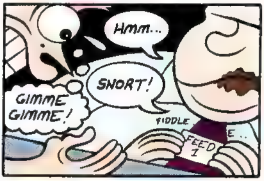


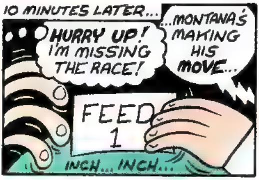
they've ignored for weeks: Juan Montoya, Al Unser, Jr., Greg Ray, and the dark horse, Buddy Lazier. And just as well, since in the first hour media stars Sarah Fisher and Lyn St. James knocked each other out on a tricky turn — blamed by some on vet Jacques Lazier, Buddy's brother, who got in their way. The coincidence of the race's two women cancelling each other out was not lost on the sporting press.



Yeah, the hype fizzles fast. Even we forgot about SUCK's boy in this race, *yawn* Indiana Andy Hillenburg.

Maybe if SUCK sent some actual racing fans we could have followed the true subtleties of the event. Don't kid yourself, it's work being a racing fan. Besides knowing the design plusses and minuses of various cars, you have to know the same for the drivers and the track's own turns and moods. SUCK salutes the real racing fans of the world as hardcore, knowledgeable people. While they enjoyed the race, we dealt with a Mr. York, a grumpy old guy who held on to our press





meal vouchers like he was giving away years off his life. He was the our one sour moment of the whole day.

Needless to say, SUCK fans, the unpopular favorite didn't have to win ugly, he won easily. Juan Montoya, international sportsman and racing champ (and yes, Indy fans, a CART racer) made The Greatest Spectacle in Sport Racing and the IRL stars look like the proverbial Sunday drivers.

The Indy 500 didn't make racing fans out of SUCK, but we came away impressed. Why? Well, when you think of all the power, money, craft, and sheer maniacal guts that go into what is basically a hundred million dollar world version of guys doing doughnuts in a 7-11 parking lot... when you think of this 84 year tradition of perfectly executing something utterly pointless... that's when you get down to what really makes this country great.

Secretary Cohen got it wrong. Harrier jets aren't the sound of freedom. The Russians and Chinese love rolling tanks down the street on May Day to let the world, and

their citizens, know who's boss. But on Memorial Day, Americans roll the fastest damn cars in the world down the street. Not to kick ass, but to BE kick-ass. Ask any vet who fought and it wasn't to take over somebody else's land, it was to preserve this lifestyle of ours, the choice to be utterly pointless if you want. Yep, that roar of thirty-three men and women spinning around for hours for no good reason at all? That's the sound of freedom, pal, whether you care or not. ▪

Editorial

Peter Bagge can be contacted either via Fantagraphics (7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA, 98115), or by email (peterbagge@earthlink.net). Your thoughts and comments are much appreciated.

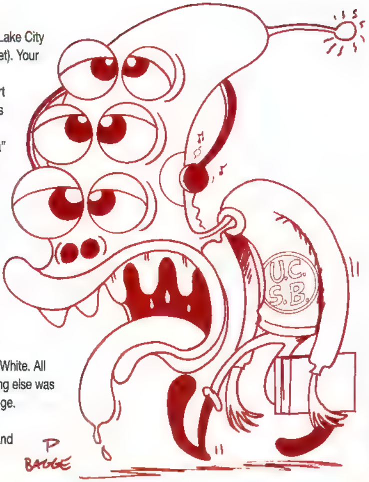
Peter Bagge's website: www.peterbagge.com. Original art can be purchased at www.comicartcollective.com. Back issues can be ordered from www.fantagraphics.com.

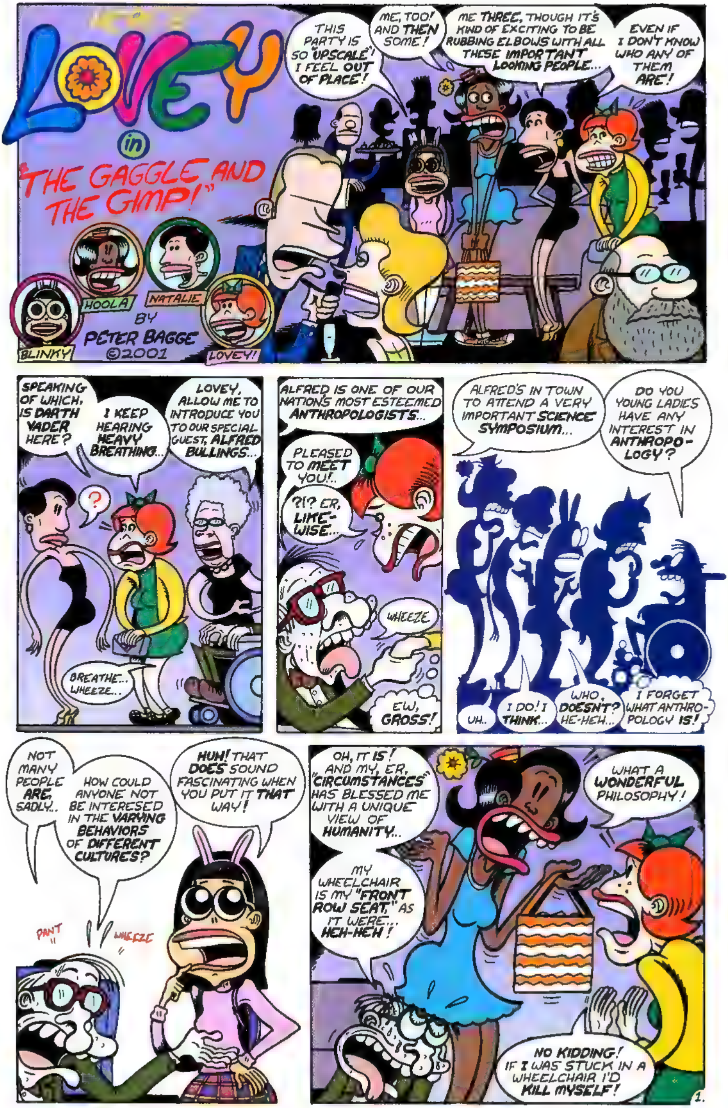
Notes on this issue: Both "Indy 2000" and "Miss America" originally appeared on the website Suck.com. Many thanks to Tim Cavanaugh and Joey Anuff... The back cover originally appeared in the Spanish edition of *GQ Magazine*.

"Indy 2000" was written by Ben Schwartz, and inked by Eric Reynolds... The art on pages 22 and 23 is from a Hanna-Barbera Beach Boys cartoon that never aired, and is copyright © 2001 AOL/Time-Warner. Artist unknown. (Special thanks to Stephenie Gladden)... The drawings on pages 24 and 25 are from the Icebox.com cartoon "Rock 'n' Roll Dad," created by P. Bagge and D. Gould, and are copyright © 2001 Icebox.

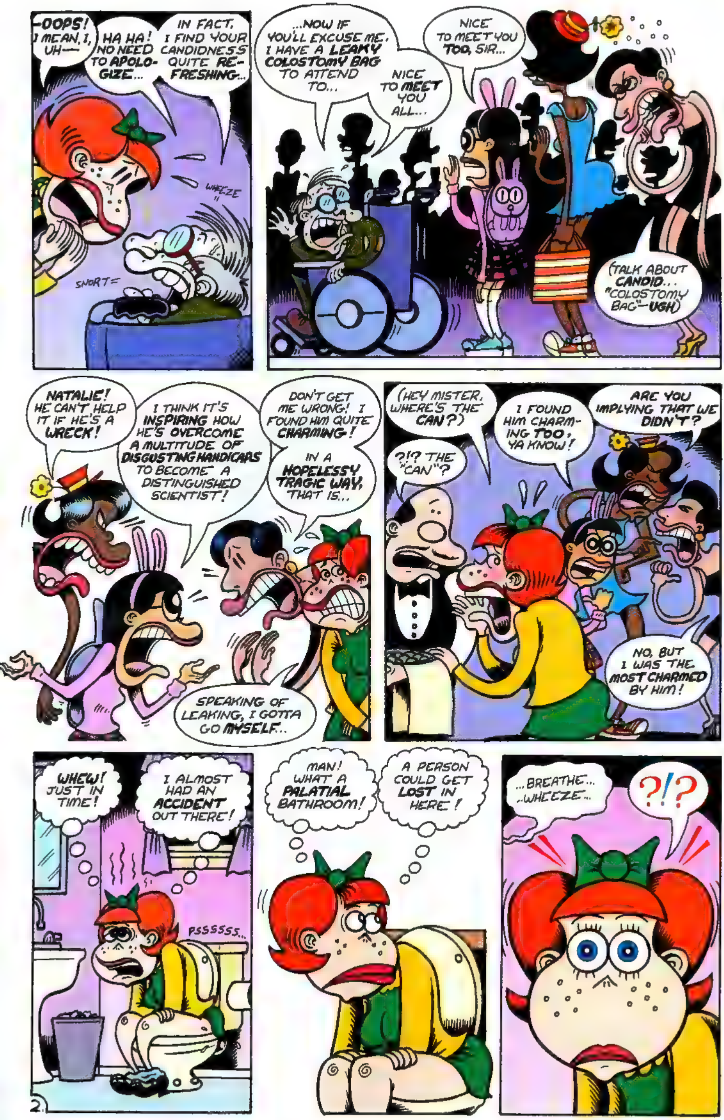
Art direction and production was done by good ol' Peppy White. All coloring was done by Joanne Bagge and Peter Bagge. Everything else was written, drawn and copyright © 2001 by the amazing Peter Bagge.

Thanks as always to Kim Thompson, Gary Groth, Eric Reynolds, Rhea Patton, Jeff Voris, Dana Gould, Sue Naegle and especially Joanne Bagge. Who let the dogs out? They did!

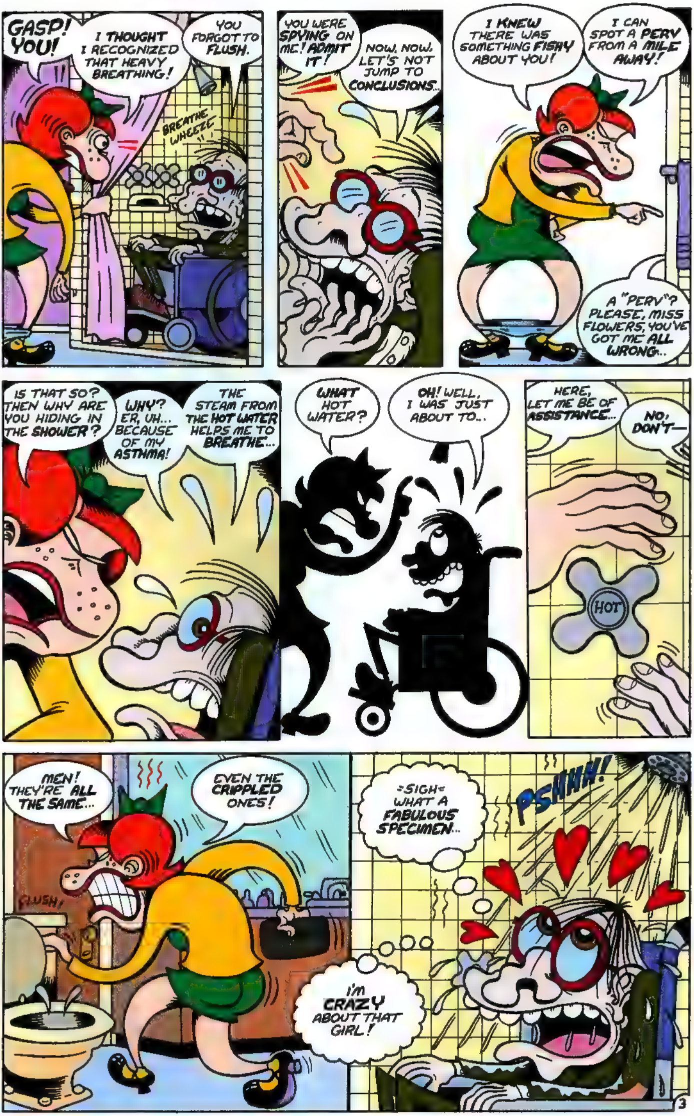




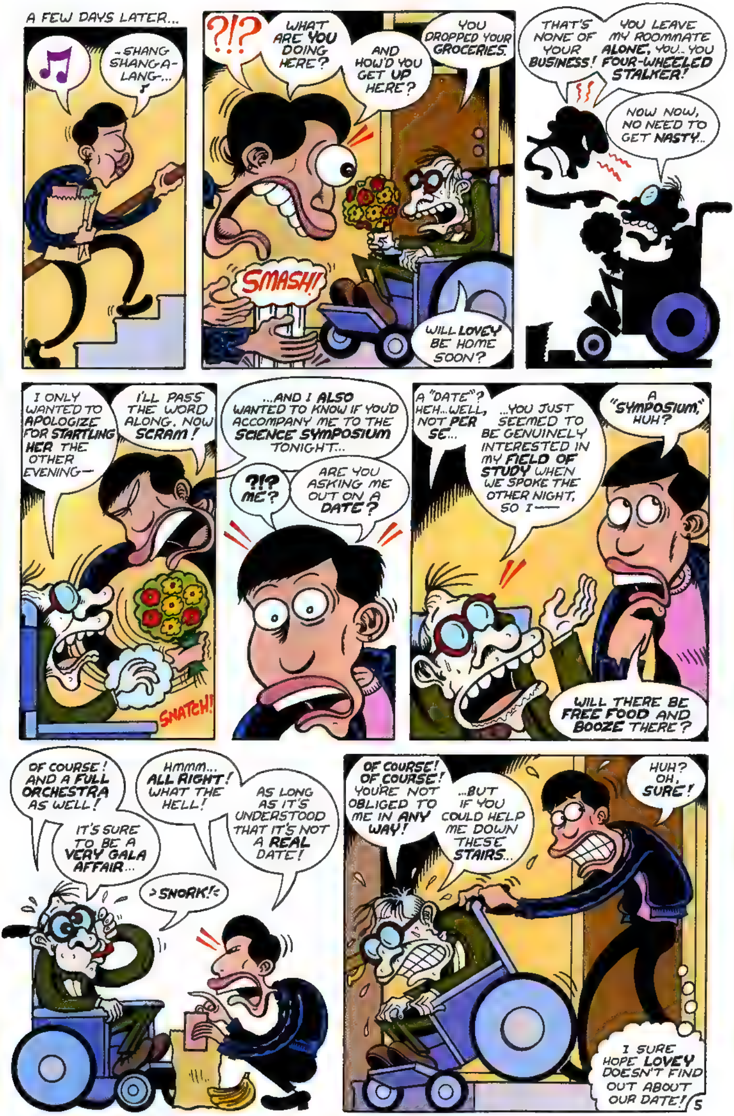
LOVEY
in
"THE GAGGLE AND THE GIMP!"
HOOLA
NATALIE
BLINKY
BY PETER BAGGE ©2001
LOVEY!
THIS PARTY IS SO "UPSCALE"! I FEEL OUT OF PLACE!
ME, TOO! AND THEN SOME!
ME THREE, THOUGH IT'S KIND OF EXCITING TO BE RUBBING ELBOWS WITH ALL THESE IMPORTANT LOOKING PEOPLE...
EVEN IF I DON'T KNOW WHO ANY OF THEM ARE!
SPEAKING OF WHICH, IS DARTH VADER HERE?
I KEEP HEARING HEAVY BREATHING...
LOVEY, ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR SPECIAL GUEST, ALFRED BULLINGS...
?
BREATHE... WHEEZE...
ALFRED IS ONE OF OUR NATION'S MOST ESTEEMED ANTHROPOLOGISTS...
PLEASED TO MEET YOU!..
?!? ER, LIKE-WISE...
WHEEZE
EW, GROSS!
ALFRED'S IN TOWN TO ATTEND A VERY IMPORTANT SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM...
DO YOU YOUNG LADIES HAVE ANY INTEREST IN ANTHROPO-LOGY?
UH..
I DO! I THINK...
WHO, DOESN'T? HE-HEH...
I FORGET WHAT ANTHRO-POLOGY IS!
NOT MANY PEOPLE ARE, SADLY...
HOW COULD ANYONE NOT BE INTERESED IN THE VARYING BEHAVIORS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES?
HUH! THAT DOES SOUND FASCINATING WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY!
PANT
WHEEZE
OH, IT IS! AND MY, ER, "CIRCUMSTANCES" HAS BLESSED ME WITH A UNIQUE VIEW OF HUMANITY...
MY WHEELCHAIR IS MY "FRONT ROW SEAT," AS IT WERE... HEH-HEH!
WHAT A WONDERFUL PHILOSOPHY!
NO KIDDING! IF I WAS STUCK IN A WHEELCHAIR I'D KILL MYSELF!



—OOPS! I MEAN, I, UH—
HA HA! NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE...
IN FACT, I FIND YOUR CANDIDNESS QUITE REFRESHING...
WHEEZE
SNORT
...NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A LEAKY COLOSTOMY BAG TO ATTEND TO...
NICE TO MEET YOU ALL...
NICE TO MEET YOU TOO, SIR...
(TALK ABOUT CANDID... "COLOSTOMY BAG"—UGH)
NATALIE! HE CAN'T HELP IT IF HE'S A WRECK!
I THINK IT'S INSPIRING HOW HE'S OVERCOME A MULTITUDE OF DISGUSTING HANDICAPS TO BECOME A DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST!
DON'T GET ME WRONG! I FOUND HIM QUITE CHARMING!
IN A HOPELESSLY TRAGIC WAY, THAT IS...
SPEAKING OF LEAKING, I GOTTA GO MYSELF...
(HEY MISTER, WHERE'S THE CAN?)
?!? THE "CAN"?
I FOUND HIM CHARMING TOO, YA KNOW!
ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT WE DIDN'T?
NO, BUT I WAS THE MOST CHARMED BY HIM!
WHEW! JUST IN TIME!
I ALMOST HAD AN ACCIDENT OUT THERE!
PSSSSSS...
MAN! WHAT A PALATIAL BATHROOM!
A PERSON COULD GET LOST IN HERE!
...BREATHE... ..WHEEZE...
?!?


GASP! YOU!
I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED THAT HEAVY BREATHING!
YOU FORGOT TO FLUSH.
BREATHE WHEEZE
YOU WERE SPYING ON ME! ADMIT IT!
NOW, NOW, LET'S NOT JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS...
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT YOU!
I CAN SPOT A PERV FROM A MILE AWAY!
A "PERV"? PLEASE, MISS FLOWERS, YOU'VE GOT ME ALL WRONG...
IS THAT SO? THEN WHY ARE YOU HIDING IN THE SHOWER?
WHY? ER, UH... BECAUSE OF MY ASTHMA!
THE STEAM FROM THE HOT WATER HELPS ME TO BREATHE...
WHAT HOT WATER?
OH! WELL, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO...
HERE, LET ME BE OF ASSISTANCE...
NO, DON'T—
HOT
MEN! THEY'RE ALL THE SAME...
EVEN THE CRIPPLED ONES!
FLUSH!
PSHHH!
SIGH WHAT A FABULOUS SPECIMEN...
I'M CRAZY ABOUT THAT GIRL!

LATER...
WELL, THAT PARTY CERTAINLY WAS... INTERESTING.
NO KIDDING. ESPECIALLY THAT WEIRD SCIENTIST GUY WHO WAS THERE...
I THOUGHT HE WAS SWEET! HE EVEN INVITED ME TO HIS PLACE TO SEE HIS BUG COLLECTION!
HE WHAT?
YOU DIDN'T ACCEPT, DID YOU?
OF COURSE I DID! WHY WOULDN'T I?
OH BROTHER...
LOOK, I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING, BUT THAT GUY IS A SLEAZOID...
I CAUGHT HIM SPYING ON ME WHILE I WAS TAKING A LEAK!
GASP!
NO!
YES! SO I'D STAY FAR AWAY FROM HIM IF I WERE YOU!
BUT, LIKE, SO WHAT IF HE'S A SLEAZE? WHAT HARM COULD HE DO?
YEAH! HE IS IN A WHEELCHAIR, AFTER ALL...
THERE'S PLENTY THAT HE COULD DO! HE'S A SCIENTIST, REMEMBER?
HE PROBABLY HAS A STUN GUN! AND KNOCK OUT DROPS!
GULP!
OHMIGOSH! THAT'S RIGHT!
HE MIGHT SLIP YOU THAT RAPE DRUG AND THEN DRAG YOU TO SOME SECRET TORTURE CHAMBER!
LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY, BLINKY!
NO, LOVEY'S RIGHT. I SHOULD AVOID HIM...
WISE DECISION, HOOLA.
THOUGH I REALLY DID WANT TO SEE HIS BUG COLLECTION...
= SIGH =
4.


A FEW DAYS LATER...
♫
-SHANG SHANG-A-LANG-... ♪
?!?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
AND HOW'D YOU GET UP HERE?
YOU DROPPED YOUR GROCERIES.
SMASH!
WILL LOVEY BE HOME SOON?
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
YOU LEAVE MY ROOMMATE ALONE, YOU...YOU FOUR-WHEELED STALKER!
NOW NOW, NO NEED TO GET NASTY...
I ONLY WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR STARTLING HER THE OTHER EVENING—
I'LL PASS THE WORD ALONG. NOW SCRAM!
SNATCH!
...AND I ALSO WANTED TO KNOW IF YOU'D ACCOMPANY ME TO THE SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM TONIGHT...
?!? ME?
ARE YOU ASKING ME OUT ON A DATE?
A "DATE"? HEH...WELL, NOT PER SE...
...YOU JUST SEEMED TO BE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN MY FIELD OF STUDY WHEN WE SPOKE THE OTHER NIGHT, SO I—
A "SYMPOSIUM," HUH?
WILL THERE BE FREE FOOD AND BOOZE THERE?
OF COURSE! AND A FULL ORCHESTRA AS WELL!
IT'S SURE TO BE A VERY GALA AFFAIR...
HMMM... ALL RIGHT! WHAT THE HELL!
AS LONG AS IT'S UNDERSTOOD THAT IT'S NOT A REAL DATE!
>SNORK!<
OF COURSE! OF COURSE! YOU'RE NOT OBLIGED TO ME IN ANY WAY!
...BUT IF YOU COULD HELP ME DOWN THESE STAIRS...
HUH? OH, SURE!
I SURE HOPE LOVEY DOESN'T FIND OUT ABOUT OUR DATE!

THAT EVENING...
YOU WHAT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE GOING ON A DATE WITH THAT... GIMP!
BUT I JUST TOLD YOU, IT'S NOT A DATE!
OH NO? TELL THAT TO YOUR DRESS!
THAT GUY'S A PERVERT, NATALIE! A PERV AND A STALKER!
AND HE'S A TWO-TIMER!
?!? A "TWO-TIMER"? HOW SO?
OH! WELL, UH, ALFRED INVITED ME TO GO TO THAT "SYMPOSIUM" TOO, BACK WHEN WE FIRST MET HIM...
HE DID?
BUT YOU TOLD HIM NO, RIGHT?
ACTUALLY, I TOLD HIM I'D THINK ABOUT IT...
HE WAS SUPPOSED TO CALL ME... =SNIFF!=
SO I WAS HIS SECOND CHOICE, EH?
WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? THAT LOW-DOWN, DOUBLE-DEALIN' CAD!
SPLAT!
JUST WAIT 'TIL HE CALLS! I'M GONNA GIVE HIM AN EARFUL!
YOU SHOULD INVITE HIM OVER SO WE CAN ALL GIVE HIM AN EARFUL!
YEAH!
NOW THERE'S A PLAN!
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THAT PHONE TO RING!
WE'LL GIVE HIM A CHEWING OUT THAT HE'LL NEVER FORGET!
NOBODY MESSES WITH US!

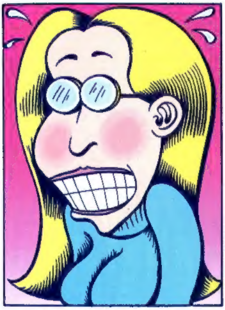
TWO HOURS LATER...
WHAT TIME WAS HE SUPPOSED TO CALL AGAIN?
EIGHT, AND IT'S HALF-PAST NINE AL-READY...
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M BEING STOOD-UP BY A GIMP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE ALL SITTING HERE WAITING FOR A GIMP TO CALL!
HOW DID WE EVER LET THIS GUY GET UNDER OUR SKIN LIKE THIS?
WELL, HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE REALLY SMART...
AND I REALLY DID WANT TO GO TO THAT SYMPOSIUM THINGY...
AND I REALLY WANTED TO SEE HIS BUG COLLECTION!
THERE'S SOMETHING VERY SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THIS ALFRED BULLINGS CHARACTER...
FIRST HE MAKES US FEEL SORRY FOR HIM, AND THEN HE HAS US ALL COMPETING FOR HIS ATTENTION! THAT MUST BE HIS "M.O."!
HOW ELSE COULD A GUY LIKE HIM GET A BUNCH OF GORGEOUS GALS LIKE US ALL IN A TIZZY?
HMMM...
GOOD POINT...
YOU MAY BE RIGHT..
I KNOW I'M RIGHT!
AND I'M GONNA HEAD OVER TO HIS PLACE RIGHT NOW TO TELL HIM WHAT FOR!
LOVEY, DON'T!
WHAT IF HE KIDNAPS YOU AND TURNS YOU INTO HIS SEX SLAVE?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! HE'S A CRIPPLE, REMEMBER?
NOW WHO'S GOING WITH ME?
NOT ME!
ME NEITHER!
I'M TOO AFRAID!
FINE! I'LL DEAL WITH HIM MYSELF!
SO LONG, COWARDS!
SLAM!
GULP!
OH DEAR...
I HOPE SHE DOESN'T HURT THE LI'L FELLAH!

LATER THAT NIGHT...
RING! RING! R—
...UGH...
HELLO?
RUB RUB
HOOLA. IT'S NATALIE! HAVE YOU HEARD FROM LOVEY LATELY?
LOVEY? I THOUGHT SHE WENT TO TELL THAT BULLINGS GUY WHAT FOR?
SHE DID, BUT SHE NEVER CAME BACK!
I'M WORRIED SICK!
OMIGOSH! CALL BLINKY! I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!
AND SO, A VIGILANTE GROUP IS FORMED...
POOR LOVEY! I HOPE SHE ISN'T HURT!
SHE'S PROBABLY TIED UP IN HIS SECRET TORTURE CHAMBER AS WE SPEAK!
IF THAT LITTLE BUGGER'S HARMED A SINGLE HAIR ON HER HEAD I SWEAR I'LL KILL HIM!
THIS IS WHERE HE LIVES?
WHY WOULD A WORLD FAMOUS SCIENTIST LIVE HERE?
THE DOOR ISN'T EVEN LOCKED!
TALK ABOUT A LACK OF SECURITY!
THE UNDER ARMS
THERE'S NO ELEVATOR, EITHER!
HOW DOES HE GET UP THESE STAIRS?
THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION!
LOOK! LOVEY'S SHOES!
I SMELL FOUL PLAY!
SMASH THE DOOR DOWN, BLINKY!

BASH!
LOVEY!
ARE YOU OKAY?
UNHAND HER, YOU FIEND!
FLASH!
RELAX, YOU GUYS! EVERYTHING'S FINE!
?!?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
AND WHAT'S WITH THE SANTA OUTFIT?!
I KNOW! ISN'T IT ADORABLE!
CLICK! CLICK!
ALFRED ASKED ME TO POSE FOR HIS CHRISTMAS CARD WITH HIM...
HOW COULD I REFUSE?
?!? ER, WELL, I, UH...
HOW COME I DON'T SEE A BUG COLLECTION?
HEY, WHAT'S THIS?!
...WHAT WOULD A "WORLD RENOWNED SCIENTIST" BE NEEDING FOOD STAMPS FOR?
HEY! MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!
AND GET A LOAD OF THESE...
...IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE TO POSE FOR ONE OF THE PROFESSOR'S "GREETING CARDS," LOVEY!
HUH? LEMME SEE THOSE...
PUT THOSE DOWN, YOU!
WHY, ALL OF THESE GIRLS ARE WEARING THE SAME OUTFIT THAT I AM!
AND THERE'S DOZENS OF THEM!
PUT THOSE DOWN, I SAY!

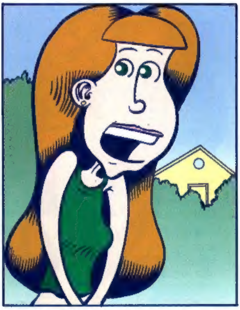
GIVE ME THOSE!
YOU LITTLE BUSY-BODIES SEEM TO HAVE NO RESPECT FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY!
GASP! LOOK! HE'S WALKING!
OMIGOSH! SO HE CAN WALK AFTER ALL!
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH ALL ALONG!
YOU BIG PHONEY! I BET YOU'RE NOT EVEN A SCIENTIST!
AND THAT WHEELCHAIR IS JUST A RUSE TO PICK UP CHICKS WITH, ISN'T IT?
N-NOW, GIRLS, IT'S NOT AS IT SEEMS...
Y-YOU SEE, I'M STILL RECOVERING FROM A HERNIA OPERATION, AND I, UH...
I CALL BULLSHIT, BULLINGS!
YOU'RE GONNA NEED THAT WHEELCHAIR FOR REAL IN A MINUTE...
BITE!
SPRAY!
PUNCH!
KARATE CHOP!
AND SO...
LOOK LIKE OUR WORK IS DONE HERE, LADIES...
INDEED! LET'S GET OUT OF THIS DUMP!
LOVEY, AREN'T YOU GOING TO CHANGE OUT OF THAT OUTFIT?
NUH-UH! I'M KEEPING IT!
I'M GONNA POSE IN IT FOR MY OWN CHRISTMAS CARD!
—OOPS, HOLD ON A MINUTE, GIRLS...
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
?
...WE'RE STILL ON FOR SATURDAY, AREN'T WE?
YOU BET!
...OOH ME HEAD...
END

ESAS LOCAS EX-NOVIAS

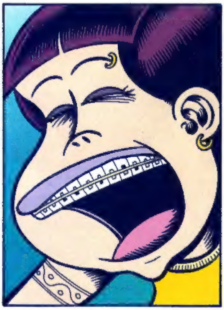


Obia sus enormes tetas

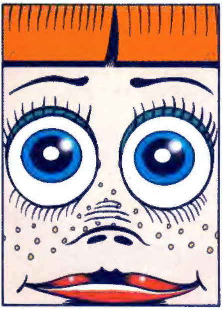
Seguro que ahora es 100% lesbiana



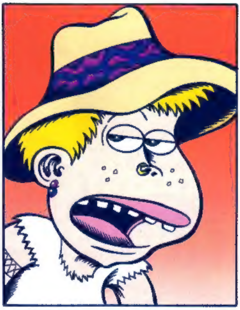
Timida (excepto cuando se emborracha)



Demasiado groupie

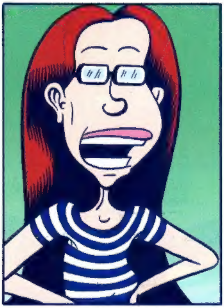


Demasiados novios a la vez

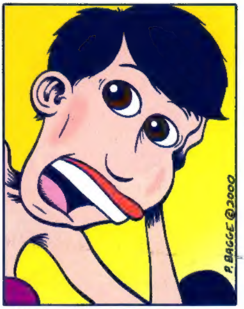


Es una ladronzuela

Jamás salía de casa



Se cortaba con cuchillas de afeitar



Se fue sin dejar el menor rastro

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